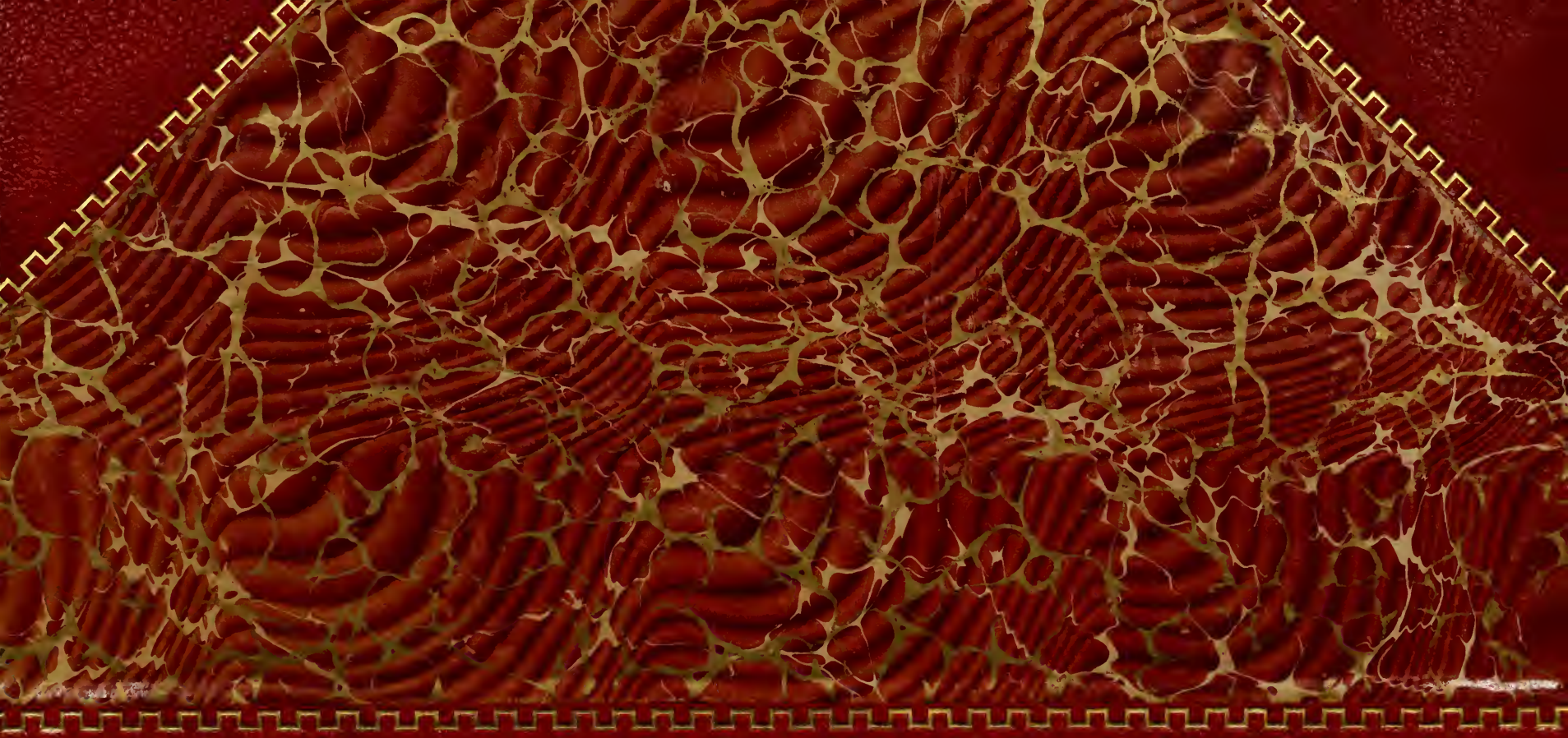

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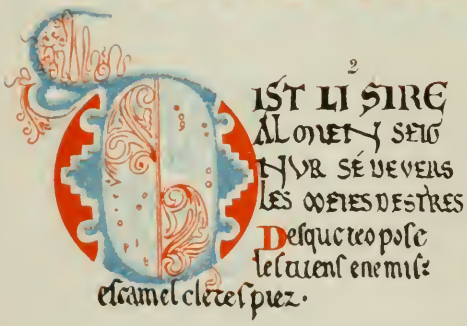

ANCIENT FRENCH MANUSCRIPTS. (Fourteenth Century.)

Although it does not appear that any translation of the Scriptures into the French language was made previous to the beginning of the fourteenth century, versions of detached parts of the Bible, of an earlier date, exist in MSS. which are regarded as of great value by the French philologists.

Ancient French MSS.

Although it does not appear that any translation of the Scriptures into the French language was made previous to the beginning of the fourteenth century, versions of detached parts of the Bible exist, of a previous date, in MS., which are consequently regarded as of great value by the French philologists. Nor are they less esteemed by the English antiquary, considering the long and intimate connection between the French and English nations, especially during the period when our language was undergoing its transformation from the old Anglo-Saxon to the modern English.

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THE

UNIVERSAL ANTHOLOGY

A Collection of the Best Literature, Ancient, Mediæval and Modern, with Biographical and Explanatory Notes

EDITED BY

RICHARD GARNETT

KEEPER OF PRINTED BOOKS AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON, 1851 TO 1899

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Bret Harte

THE RISE OF THE "SHORT STORY"

By Bret Harte

As it has been the custom of good-natured reviewers to associate the present writer with the origin of the American "short story," he may have a reasonable excuse for offering the following reflections,—partly the result of his own observations during the last thirty years, and partly from his experience in the introduction of this form of literature to the pages of the western Magazine of which he was editor at the beginning of that period. But he is far from claiming the invention, or of even attributing its genesis to that particular occasion. The short story was familiar enough in form in America during the early half of the century; perhaps the proverbial haste of American life was some inducement to its brevity. It had been the medium through which some of the most characteristic work of the best American writers had won the approbation of the public. Poe—a master of the art, as yet unsurpassed—had written; Longfellow and Hawthorne had lent it the graces of the English classics. But it was not the American short story of to-day. It was not characteristic of American life, American habits, nor American thought. It was not vital and instinct with the experience and observation of the average American; it made no attempt to follow his reasoning or to understand his peculiar form of expression—which it was apt to consider vulgar; it had no sympathy with those dramatic contrasts and surprises which are the wonders of American Civilisation; it took no account of the modifications of environment and of geographical limitations; indeed, it knew little of American

geography. Of all that was distinctly American it was evasive—when it was not apologetic. And even when graced by the style of the best masters, it was distinctly provincial.

It would be easier to trace the causes which produced this than to assign any distinct occasion or period for the change. What was called American literature was still limited to English methods and upon English models. The best writers either wandered far afield for their inspiration, or, restricted to home material, were historical or legendary; artistically contemplative of their own country, but seldom observant. Literature abode on a scant fringe of the Atlantic seaboard gathering the drift from other shores, and hearing the murmur of other lands rather than the voices of its own; it was either expressed in an artificial treatment of life in the cities, or, as with Irving, was frankly satirical of provincial social ambition. There was much "fine" writing; there were American Addisons, Steeles, and Lambs—there were provincial "Spectators" and "Tatlers." The sentiment was English. Even Irving in the pathetic sketch of "The Wife" echoed the style of "Rosamund Grey." There were sketches of American life in the form of the English Essayists, with no attempt to understand the American character. The literary man had little sympathy with the rough and half-civilised masses who were making his country's history; if he used them at all it was as a foil to bring into greater relief his hero of the unmistakable English pattern. In his slavish imitation of the foreigner, he did not, however, succeed in retaining the foreigner's quick appreciation of novelty. It took an Englishman to first develop the humour and picturesqueness of American or "Yankee" dialect, but Judge Haliburton succeeded better in reproducing "Sam Slick's" speech than his character. Dr. Judd's "Margaret,"—one of the earlier American stories,—although a vivid picture of New England farm-life and strongly marked with local colour, was in incident and treatment a mere imitation of English rural tragedy. It would, indeed, seem that while the American people had shaken off the English yoke in Government, politics, and national progression, while they had already startled the Old World with invention and

originality in practical ideas, they had never freed themselves from the trammels of English literary precedent. The old sneer: "Who reads an American book?" might have been answered by another: "There are no *American* books."

But while the American literary imagination was still under the influence of English tradition, an unexpected factor was developing to diminish its power. It was *Humour*—of a quality as distinct and original as the country and civilisation in which it was developed. It was at first noticeable in the anecdote or "story," and, after the fashion of such beginnings, was orally transmitted. It was common in the bar-rooms, the gatherings in the "country store," and finally at public meetings in the mouths of "stump orators." Arguments were clinched, and political principles illustrated by "a funny story." It invaded even the camp meeting and pulpit. It at last received the currency of the public press. But wherever met it was so distinctly original and novel, so individual and characteristic, that it was at once known and appreciated abroad as "an American story." Crude at first, it received a literary polish in the press, but its dominant quality remained. It was concise and condense, yet suggestive. It was delightfully extravagant—or a miracle of understatement. It voiced not only the dialect, but the habits of thought of a people or locality. It gave a new interest to slang. From a paragraph of a dozen lines it grew into a half column, but always retaining its conciseness and felicity of statement. It was a foe to prolixity of any kind, it admitted no fine writing nor affectation of style. It went directly to the point. It was burdened by no conscientiousness; it was often irreverent; it was devoid of all moral responsibility—but it was original! By degrees it developed character with its incident, often, in a few lines, gave a striking photograph of a community or a section, but always reached its conclusion without an unnecessary word. It became—and still exists—as an essential feature of newspaper literature. It was the parent of the American "short story."

But although these beginnings assumed more of a national character than American serious or polite literature they were

still purely comic, and their only immediate result was the development of a number of humorists in the columns of the daily press—all possessing the dominant national quality with a certain individuality of their own. For a while it seemed as if they were losing the faculty of story-telling in the elaboration of eccentric character—chiefly used as a vehicle for smart sayings, extravagant incident, or political satire. They were eagerly received by the public and, in their day, were immensely popular, and probably were better known at home and abroad than the more academic but less national humorists of New York or Boston. The national note was always struck even in their individual variations, and the admirable portraiture of the shrewd and humorous showman in "Artemus Ward" survived his more mechanical bad spelling. Yet they did not invade the current narrative fiction; the short and long story-tellers went with their old-fashioned methods, their admirable morals, their well-worn sentiments, their colourless heroes and heroines of the first ranks of provincial society. Neither did social and political convulsions bring anything new in the way of Romance. The Mexican war gave us the delightful satires of Hosea Bigelow, but no dramatic narrative. The anti-slavery struggle before the War of the Rebellion produced a successful partisan political novel—on the old lines—with only the purely American characters of the negro "Topsy," and the New England "Miss Ophelia." The War itself, prolific as it was of poetry and eloquence—was barren of romance, except for Edward Everett Hale's artistic and sympathetic *The Man without a Country*. The tragedies enacted, the sacrifices offered, not only on the battlefield but in the division of families and households; the conflict of superb Quixotism and reckless gallantry against Reason and Duty fought out in quiet border farmhouses and plantations; the re-incarnation of Puritan and Cavalier in a wild environment of trackless wastes, pestilential swamps, and rugged mountains; the patient endurance of both the conqueror and the conquered—all these found no echo in the romance of the period. Out of the battle smoke that covered half a continent, drifted into the pages of magazines, shadowy but

correct figures of blameless virgins of the North—heroines or fashionable belles—habited as hospital nurses, bearing away the deeply wounded but more deeply misunderstood Harvard or Yale graduate lover who had rushed to bury his broken heart in the conflict. It seems almost incredible that, until the last few years, nothing worthy of that tremendous episode has been preserved by the pen of the romancer.

But if the war produced no characteristic American story it brought the literary man nearer his work. It opened to him distinct conditions of life in his own country, of which he had no previous conception; it revealed communities governed by customs and morals unlike his own, yet intensely human and American. The lighter side of some of these he had learned from the humorists before alluded to; the grim realities of war and the stress of circumstances had suddenly given them a pathetic or dramatic reality. Whether he had acquired this knowledge of them with a musket or a gilded strap on his shoulder, or whether he was later a peaceful "carpet bagger" into the desolate homes of the south and south-west, he knew something personally of their romantic and picturesque value in story. Many cultivated aspirants for literature, as well as many seasoned writers for the press, were among the volunteer soldiery. Again, the composition of the army was heterogeneous: regiments from the West rubbed shoulders with regiments from the East; spruce city clerks hob-nobbed with backwoodsmen, and the student fresh from college shared his rations with the half-educated western farmer. The Union for the first time recognised its competent parts; the natives knew each other. The literary man must have seen heroes and heroines where he had never looked for them, situations that he had never dreamt of. Yet it is a mortifying proof of the strength of inherited literary traditions, that he never dared until quite recently to make a test of them. It is still more strange that he should have waited for the initiative to be taken by a still more crude, wild, and more western civilisation—that of California!

The gold discovery had drawn to the Pacific slope of the continent a still more heterogeneous and remarkable population. The

immigration of 1849 and 1850 had taken farmers from the plough, merchants from their desks, and students from their books, while every profession was represented in the motley crowd of gold-seekers. Europe and her colonies had contributed to swell these adventurers — for adventurers they were whatever their purpose; the risks were great, the journey long and difficult — the nearest came from a distance of over a thousand miles; that the men were necessarily pre-equipped with courage, faith, and endurance was a foregone conclusion. They were mainly young; a grey-haired man was a curiosity in the mines in the early days, and an object of rude respect and reverence. They were consequently free from the trammels of precedent or tradition in arranging their lives and making their rude homes. There was a singular fraternity in this ideal republic into which all men entered free and equal. Distinction of previous position or advantages were unknown, even record and reputation for ill or good were of little benefit or embarrassment to the possessor; men were accepted for what they actually were, and what they could do in taking their part in the camp or settlement. The severest economy, the direst poverty, the most menial labour carried no shame nor disgrace with it; individual success brought neither envy or jealousy. What was one man's fortune to-day might be the luck of another to-morrow. And to this Utopian simplicity of the people, the environment of magnificent scenery, an unique climate, and a vegetation that was marvellous in its proportions and spontaneity of growth; let it be further considered that the strongest relief was given to this picture by its setting among the crumbling ruins of early Spanish possession—whose monuments still existed in Mission and Presidio, and whose legitimate Castilian descendants still lived and moved in picturesque and dignified contrast to their energetic invaders—and it must be admitted that a condition of romantic and dramatic possibilities was created unrivalled in history.

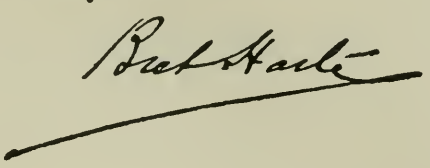
But the earlier literature of the Pacific slope was, like that of the Atlantic seaboard, national and characteristic only in its humour. The local press sparkled with wit and satire, and as, in the East, developed its usual individual humorists. Of these

should be mentioned the earliest pioneers of Californian humour—Lieut. Derby, an U.S. army engineer officer, author of a series of delightful extravagances known as the "Squibob Papers," and the later and universally known "Mark Twain" who contributed "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras" to the columns of the weekly press. *The San Francisco News Letter*, whose whilom contributor, Major Bierce, has since written some of the most graphic romances of the Civil War; *The Golden Era*, in which the present writer published his earlier sketches, and *The Californian*, to which, as editor, in burlesque imitation of the enterprise of his journalistic betters, he contributed "The Condensed Novels," were the foremost literary weeklies. These were all more or less characteristically American, but it was again remarkable that the more literary, romantic, and imaginative romances had no national flavour. The better remembered serious work in the pages of the only literary magazine *The Pioneer*, was a romance of spiritualism and psychological study, and a poem on the Chandos picture of Shakespeare!

With this singular experience before him, the present writer was called upon to take the editorial control of the *Overland Monthly*, a much more ambitious magazine venture than had yet appeared in California. The best writers had been invited to contribute to its pages. But in looking over his materials on preparing the first number, he was discouraged to find the same notable lack of characteristic fiction. There were good literary articles, sketches of foreign travel, and some essays in description of the natural resources of California—excellent, from a commercial and advertising view-point. But he failed to discover anything of that wild and picturesque life which had impressed him, first as a truant schoolboy, and afterwards as a youthful schoolmaster among the mining population. In this perplexity he determined to attempt to make good the deficiency himself. He wrote "The Luck of Roaring Camp." However far short it fell of his ideal and his purpose, he conscientiously believed that he had painted much that "he saw, and part of which he was," that his subject and characters were distinctly Californian, as was equally his treatment of them.

But an unexpected circumstance here intervened. The publication of the story was objected to by both printer and publisher, virtually for not being in the conventional line of subject, treatment, and morals! The introduction of the abandoned outcast mother of the foundling "Luck," and the language used by the characters, received a serious warning and protest. The writer was obliged to use his right as editor to save his unfortunate contribution from oblivion. When it appeared at last, he saw with consternation that the printer and publisher had really voiced the local opinion; that the press of California was still strongly dominated by the old conservatism and conventionalism of the East, and that when "The Luck of Roaring Camp" was not denounced as "improper" and "corrupting," it was coldly received as being "singular" and "strange." A still more extraordinary instance of the "provincial note" was struck in the criticism of a religious paper that the story was strongly "unfavourable to immigration" and decidedly unprovocative of the "investment of foreign capital." However, its instantaneous and cordial acceptance as a new departure by the critics of the Eastern States and Europe, enabled the writer to follow it with other stories of a like character. More than that, he was gratified to find a disposition on the part of his contributors to shake off their conservative trammels, and in an admirable and original sketch of a wandering Circus attendant, called "Centrepole Bill," he was delighted to recognise and welcome a convert. The term "imitators," often used by the critics who, as previously stated, had claimed for the present writer the *invention* of this kind of literature, could not fairly apply to those who had cut loose from conventional methods, and sought to honestly describe the life around them, and he can only claim to have shown them that it could be done. How well it has since been done, what charm of individual flavour and style has been brought to it by such writers as Harris, Cable, Page, Mark Twain in *Huckleberry Finn*, the author of the *Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains*, and Miss Wilkins, the average reader need not be told. It would seem evident, therefore, that the secret of the American short story was the treatment of characteristic American life, with absolute

knowledge of its peculiarities and sympathy with its methods; with no fastidious ignoring of its habitual expression, or the inchoate poetry that may be found even hidden in its slang; with no moral determination except that which may be the legitimate outcome of the story itself; with no more elimination than may be necessary for the artistic conception, and never from the fear of the "fetish" of conventionalism. Of such is the American short story of to-day—the germ of American literature to come.



VICTORINE'S MARRIAGE.

By GEORGE SAND.

(Translated for this work by FORREST MORGAN.)

[ARMANTINE LUCILE AURORE DUPIN was born at Paris, July 5, 1804. Her ancestry was a mass of illegitimacies, some of them of the foremost ability and distinction, and several illuminating the problem of her genius and tastes: her mother, a bird-fancier's daughter, was the new-married mistress of her father, an able lieutenant of rich literary gifts; her paternal grandfather was a farmer-general, who married the illegitimate daughter of Marshal Saxe, himself the illegitimate son of Augustus the Strong of Saxony by Countess Königsmarck. She was therefore a blood relation of the later Bourbons, while a social rebel by her history, always pleading the cause of natural love against convention, and democracy against class feeling — the two chief notes of the very play here presented. At three she followed her father to Spain on Murat's staff, was adopted as the child of the regiment and dressed in uniform, and lived in the royal palace. Shortly after his return he was killed, and for ten years afterward she lived with her mother in her grandmother's château at Nohant in Berri, imbibing a passionate love for country life, and becoming deeply saturated with knowledge of the peasantry. The grandmother was an old aristocrat who hated the low-born mother and was jealous of her grandchild's affection, and the household was not peaceful. She picked up under a shirking tutor an irregular education, mainly of romance-reading. At thirteen she was sent to the English Augustinian convent in Paris, and was not allowed to go outside the walls for two years. For a while she "cut up" wildly; then had a sudden emotional conversion half based on homesickness. At sixteen she was recalled to Nohant, and resumed the old free life; but two years later (1822), on her grandmother's death, was about to return to the convent (presumably therefore having its charms for her), when her friends persuaded her into an "arranged" marriage with a retired officer, Baron Dudevant. They had a son and daughter, and no open quarrel; but he was a hunting, hard-drinking, unsentimental country squire, and after nine years she arranged an uncontested separation, took her daughter and an allowance of $300 a year, and went to Paris to seek her fortune. After various genteel shifts and much squalid misery, she tried literature; failed on the *Figaro;* then struck up a literary partnership with an old Nohant visitor and young law student, Jules Sandeau, and wrote a novel with him, "Rose and Blanche," as by "Jules Sand." A second, "Indiana," she wrote alone; she

wished to preserve the figment of partnership and use the same pseudonym, but Sandeau would not consent, and she compromised on "George Sand." The novel, with an unhappily married and noble-hearted woman for heroine, and an unbearable husband and a not more estimable lover of the wife for male characters, created a tremendous sensation, and raised her at once to the foremost rank of French novelists. "Valentine," a novel glorifying misalliances, followed two months later; then (1833) "Lélie," a wild, glowing, hysterical assault on every sort of social law. It resulted in a most unhappy *liaison* and journey to Italy (1833–1835) with Alfred de Musset, proving that irregular relations are no more guarantee of happiness than regular ones. Musset told his version of it in his "Confession of a Child of the Century" (1836); in 1858 George Sand told hers with deep bitterness in "She and He," to which the poet's brother retorted with "He and She." The literary output of this period was first "The Private Secretary," motive a secret marriage with good results; and "Jacques," "André," and "Leone Leoni," on the theme evidently suggested by the situation, the same as Shelley's, that love should have no law but itself. "Mauprat" and "Simon" (1836) glorify the power of love to ennoble the dullest or wildest natures; "The Last Aldini" (1837) is on the chaste love of a great Venetian lady for her gondolier. "Letters of a Traveler" are a valuable pendant to the novels. Pierre Leroux influenced her toward socialism, Michel de Bourges (who took charge of obtaining her a legal divorce, in which she was given both children, and must therefore have had some right on her side) toward communism, and Lamennais to humanitarian Christianity: the various ideas found expression specially in the "Letters to Marcia" (1837), "Spiridion" (1838), "The Companion of a French Journey" (1841), "The Countess of Rudolstadt" (1843), and "The Miller of Angibault" (1845). In 1837 she had become warmly interested in the sick Chopin, and went with him to Majorca, where he recovered his health for the time; later, from 1843 till his death in 1849, she cared for him with great tenderness. She took a prominent part in the Revolution of 1848, but was disgusted with its results and retired to Nohant, where for more than a quarter of a century she lived in almost undisturbed peace, and a literary fertility so great that it cannot even be catalogued here, interested in her peasants and writing plays for her little theatre, making dresses for the marionettes, etc. Only the war of 1870 brought forth a sharp cry from her. She died June 8, 1876. Among her many other novels may be specially mentioned "The Devil's Pool" (1846), "Little Fadette" (1849), and "The Snow Man" (1859). Of her many plays, the most famous are the one here given (a sequel to Sedaine's "Philosopher Without Knowing it"), "François le Champi," "Claudie," and "The Marquis of Villemer."]

Cast of Characters.

M. and Mme. Vanderke, a rich merchant and his wife.

Alexis Vanderke, their son, naval officer; Sophie, their married daughter.

Antoine, Vanderke's confidential clerk; Victorine, his daughter.

Fulgence, a clerk of Vanderke's.

A Servant.

Scene: A large French town in 1705.

ACT I.

Scene: Interior of a large mercantile office room. At right of the spectators, a table covered with papers and account books. At left, first wing, a high desk to write standing up at. Door at rear, door at right second wing.

Scene I.

VICTORINE *seated at left, handkerchief in hand and work on knees.* ANTOINE *standing, center.*

Antoine — What! I catch you with red eyes and embarrassed air, and you'll stick to it you haven't been crying! or maybe you'll tell me as you generally do, that girls cry sometimes to make the time hang less heavy?

Victorine — No, papa, I'll tell you this time: I'm crying — I'm crying because the time hangs heavy.

Antoine — And why does it hang heavy? because you're a lazy creature. If you had to work fifteen hours a day like me, you wouldn't find the time long.

Victorine — But I don't find the time long, I find it dismal.

Antoine — Dismal? it's superb weather. Victorine, I believe you're getting crazy!

Victorine — And, papa, you're getting cross! — you speak harshly to me. [*Rises.*] Now, papa, what is it you've had against me for some time?

Antoine [*melted*] — I have — I have — [*Severely.*] I have, that I've no time to attend to your vapors — your foolishness — [*Returning to his desk.*] There's a girl to be pitied a lot because an honest marriage is being arranged for her! [*Coming back, and angry to see Victorine crying again.*] Come now, I want to know what your tears are for — speak up!

Victorine — I assure you, father, I don't know myself. I am just like that: I want to cry at times, and still oftener since my marriage is settled.

Antoine — You don't want to get married because you know I want it. Is that it?

Victorine — I didn't say —

Antoine — You don't like Fulgence?

Victorine — Why, yes — I like him.

Antoine — No, no, you think he isn't elegant enough, fine enough for you!

Victorine — Oh, he is quite elegant enough for me.

Antoine — You don't value an honest man above everything else.

Victorine — Oh, but indeed—

Antoine — He doesn't spend time enough over you, he doesn't keep trying to please you, and as for me, I don't know what picking out a son-in-law means!

Victorine — Yes, yes, yes, yes! — Good gracious, yes!

Antoine — Well, then, what *do* you want? What marriage would you lay claim to? You despise your father's station! A clerk, a working man, oh pshaw! You've got to have a marquis, a prince!

Victorine — Laugh at me all you like, papa, but I'm afraid of not loving my husband enough — that he won't be satisfied with what I am — that I shan't be sensible enough for him — well, I think it's too early to marry at seventeen.

Antoine [*seating himself at his desk*] — Would to heaven you had been married long ago!

Victorine — Oh, why do you wish that?

Antoine — There's no use trying to make you understand. Look here, dry your silly eyes, and take up your work, while I go about mine.

Victorine — Do you need to have me stay here, papa?

Antoine — Why, where are you going now? You're never with me.

Victorine — Oh, I'll stay as long as you want; I'm never better satisfied than with you. But while you're working at your figures, you don't look at me: it's just as if you were alone.

Antoine — Well, you look at me, as you've nothing better to do!

Victorine — Look at you?

Antoine — Yes, look at me sharp while I work, and then you can tell me what you've been thinking about.

Victorine [*taking a chair and sitting down beside* ANTOINE] — I am willing, papa.

Antoine [*after rapidly copying a sheet, laying down his pen and looking at his daughter*] — Well?

Victorine — Well, father?

Antoine — What are you thinking about?

Victorine — I am thinking about you.

Antoine — What are you thinking about me?

Victorine — That you have a great deal of trouble.

Antoine — A great deal! What next?

Victorine — That you are very fond of your master, the good M. Vanderke; that you would die for him as you have lived for him; that you place his interests above your own; that you know but one thing in the world, your duty, and that you would sacrifice to that duty your happiness — and mine, to say the last word!

Antoine — Yes! you are a sharp guesser, and you think straighter than you look to. And it follows —

Victorine — That I ought to imitate you in everything; not to have an idea or a will that you don't approve of, and always to have your example before my eyes.

Antoine — Never lose sight of that; and for the present, if you have any business in the house, go on. I won't hold you back.

Victorine [*rising*] — I'll go and see if Sophie —

Antoine — Can't you break yourself of that familiarity with Mademoiselle?

Victorine — Ah! And, papa, can't you break yourself in to calling her "Madame"? All right! I'll go and see if my young mistress [*aside, putting back her chair to the left:* my nice friend; — *aloud*] needs me. Won't you kiss me, father?

[*Goes up to* ANTOINE.

Antoine [*looking at her intently*] — Do you deserve to have me kiss you, now, at the bottom of your heart?

Victorine — Yes.

Antoine [*gazing at her steadily*] — Quite sure?

Victorine — Oh, quite sure!

[*He kisses her. She goes out at rear, looking back at him tenderly.*

SCENE II.

Antoine [*alone*] — Yes, it's quite sure. She is an honest soul, incapable of lying! She is young, weak, restless — but she is as honest as her poor mother was. Ah, how a girl needs her mother! We men don't understand anything about managing these young natures. [*To* FULGENCE, *who enters by door at right, holding papers.*] Ah, is it you, Fulgence?

Scene III.

Fulgence — Monsieur sends you these two more accounts to register.

Antoine — All right: give them here.

Fulgence [*laying the accounts on* Antoine's *desk*] — Isn't Mlle. Victorine here? I haven't seen her yet to-day.

Antoine — Ah, these lovers!

Fulgence — Do you find fault with me for it, M. Antoine?

Antoine — No, my boy, so long as your work doesn't suffer, and you don't neglect anything —

Fulgence — Duty is a religion for me as for you.

[*Stands up at the high desk, and starts to work.*

Antoine — I know it. And I congratulate myself on the choice I made of you for a son-in-law. You are an honest man, Fulgence, a steady, punctual, sensible man. You have nothing, it is true; but when a man is industrious and modest in his tastes, he is always rich enough.

Fulgence [*writing*] — No doubt. But still —

Antoine — But still what? My daughter isn't rich. My savings, I have told you, are very small, and I have never allowed M. Vanderke to raise my salary. But with you it is different. You have a rather important place here; you are better educated and consequently more useful than I. You have been here two years already; and you will be raised little by little on account of your services.

Fulgence [*coming back to the center*] — I don't insist on it. M. Vanderke has just given his daughter a handsome dowry, and there's his son who has come of age to cut a great dash — and who will perhaps have debts. M. Vanderke pays his clerks well; when there is overtime, he gives them very square extra wages. It would be an injustice to ask more — and — I should be surprised if it was thought of. [*Sets to work again.*

Antoine — That's good; I am as well satisfied with your sentiments as you are with your lot. [*Rising and carrying over to* Fulgence *the two accounts the latter gave him on entering.*] You will be boarded and lodged here.

Fulgence [*turning around with some emotion*] — This is too many kindnesses! Why, I, who am nothing, who have nothing! I feel ashamed —

Antoine [*coming forward*] — Don't let's talk any more about that. I consider you rich enough with your courage and your work.

Fulgence — You are very disinterested, M. Antoine !

Antoine — I disinterested ? Why shouldn't I be ? Why should I care for money ? Since the time I've been counting it, receiving it, pouring it out ; since it has been passing through my hands and under my eyes, — it is here like a river, — I can't be dazzled with it any more, and when one swims in midstream, he is no longer thirsty. I have a master who is so good, so generous, who, if I said to him one fine day, " Monsieur, I'd like — I'd very much like one of those baskets of money you empty into your safes every day," he'd answer : " You want that ? Take it, my dear Antoine, take it ! You have earned it well, and it is a pleasure to me to satisfy you."

Fulgence [*attentive and anxious*] — Ah ! M. Vanderke would say that to you ?

Antoine — Yes indeed ! and I should be rich this minute if I had accepted all he wanted to give me. But he is a man who has so much good to do, and does it with so much pleasure, that when I see him able to render some useful service, or give some handsome present to his children, I'd secretly put in my own money rather than see him deprived of it.

Fulgence [*leaving his place and coming over to* ANTOINE] — You have never explained yourself so fully to me, M. Antoine, and what you tell me does me good. So you haven't the ambition that nearly all parents have for their children ? you have never had a passionate desire your daughter should be rich ?

Antoine — Never ! In that I am the pattern of Monsieur, who wishes nothing for his own but honor and good fame. He would be wretched to the depths of his soul if he thought them covetous. [*Returning to his desk.*] You know his history ?

Fulgence [*returning to his high desk*] — M. Vanderke's history ? Yes. At least I know that he is a Frenchman of rank ; that he is called the Baron de Clavières, that he has a sister who is a marquise, and that he took the name he bears to carry on the business of a Dutch merchant who had rescued him on his ship, and later adopted him, when he was young, poor, and pursued in his own country by the results of a duel.

Antoine — That's it. That's what proves that he has no prejudices of birth. He has considered it nothing derogatory to devote his life to work. You don't see on his houses or his carriages either blazon or crown ; and while many revenue farmers pay to have it on, he who has it makes no display of it. Well, he has no more love for money than he has for titles. He became a merchant from gratitude ; he has remained

a merchant from love of order and activity. He has become rich without desiring anything but to set an example of probity in commerce, and he always has set it. He laughs at the reproaches of his sister and the disdain of his caste, and wants his children to be proud of his principles.

Fulgence [*rather disdainfully*] — But his son doesn't share them?

Antoine — M. Alexis Vanderke hasn't settled opinions yet, perhaps. He is rather led away by the world, but he is a fine young man, a worthy boy! I love him as if he were my son, and I know he will continue the good work his father is doing. — Hush! there he is!

[*During this entire scene* ANTOINE *is at his desk*, FULGENCE *standing up to write at his high one. They leave and resume their places while talking, without ceasing to appear occupied.*

SCENE IV.

Alexis [*entering by the door at right*] — Good morning, father Antoine! [*Shakes hands with him and nods to* FULGENCE.] Good morning, M. Fulgence. [*To* ANTOINE.] I have come to ask you for twenty-five louis more: I've got some purchases to make this morning.

Antoine — I'll count it out for you. But I haven't it here — I must go to the safe. [*Goes out by door at right.*

SCENE V.

Alexis — Well, M. Fulgence, when does the marriage come off?

Fulgence [*coldly, remaining beside his desk*] — In a few days, I expect: the last bann has been published.

Alexis — Well, hurry up! for I'm going to Paris, and I'd like to dance at your wedding first.

Fulgence [*coldly*] — You do me honor.

Alexis — I congratulate you. You are marrying a lovely girl, and a sweet and modest one! I am her foster-brother; her mother was my nurse; we have been brought up together, my sister, she, and I; and — though my sister is very good, Victorine has always been the best of us three. You won't take it ill if I should make her a little wedding present? I am going out for that this morning.

Fulgence [*stiffly*] — What, monsieur! those twenty-five louis —

Alexis [*smiling*] — That doesn't concern you. Only I ought — I prefer to have your permission to offer your fiancée such a thing — and you will grant it?

Fulgence [*in an altered voice*] — Monsieur, if my wife —

Alexis [*laughing constrainedly*] — Ah, you call her your wife already?

Fulgence [*greatly disturbed*] — It is too soon, I admit. If Mlle. Victorine —

Alexis [*confidently*] — Oh, Victorine won't refuse me. When people are happy, they are not proud. They take everything in good part. [*Struck with* FULGENCE'S *expression.*] You seem annoyed, distressed —

Fulgence — I?

Alexis [*kindly*] — Are you working very hard?

Fulgence — Don't trouble about that, monsieur.

Alexis — But I don't find you with a satisfied and radiant air, as you ought to be; you are not like Victorine — she is gay as a lark, and just now, with my sister, she was laughing at the slightest thing.

Fulgence — Ah, she is with Madame? — she is laughing? Monsieur has seen her already this morning? [*Aside.*] Before me! always!

Alexis — Why, certainly, and I complimented her on her good humor.

Fulgence [*aside*] — Oh, I'll leave this house as soon as I'm married!

SCENE VI.

Antoine [*entering at right, placing the twenty-five louis on his desk, and opening a cash book as he seats himself*] — Here's what you asked me for.

Alexis — Do you enter that?

Antoine — What, monsieur, do I ever forget to enter anything? See, here is your account; I've got everything down to a penny.

Alexis — I don't doubt it. [*Glancing at the register.*] Hah! haven't you added up my past two months' money wrong?

Antoine — I have not closed up the account for those; I am waiting for the end of them.

Alexis — And has my father seen this book?

Antoine — He saw it last month. Every month I show him the balances of the establishment.

Alexis — And he didn't object to anything?

Antoine — No, monsieur.

Alexis — If he thought I was going it too fast — you'd tell me, Antoine?

Antoine — He? You don't know him very well!

Alexis — Well, you, then: if you were dissatisfied with me, you ought to let me know.

Antoine — Are you laughing at me?

Alexis — See here, do you want to spoil me too?

Antoine — Well, and who should be spoiled here if not you, I'd like to know?

Alexis [*placing his hand on Antoine's shoulder*] — To think there are beings worth a thousand times more than we, who make it their duty to render us happy! Have you still your parents, M. Fulgence?

Fulgence — No, monsieur: I hardly knew them.

Alexis — Ah, I commiserate you! You don't know what it is to be loved! — Good-by, Antoine.

[*Gives him his hand and starts to leave.*

Scene VII.

Victorine [*entering by the rear*] — Papa, Mme. Vanderke begs you to come to her immediately, if you please.

Antoine — Ah, ha! I know what that means!

[*Goes out by rear.*

Scene VIII.

Alexis — Ah, Victorine, I was just now on the point of reproaching your bridegroom. He has a careworn look. Love makes him sad: it makes you gay, on the contrary. I leave you together to discuss which of the two ways of loving is the best.

[*Goes out by rear.*

Scene IX.

Victorine — Why are you sad, Fulgence? is it true what he said?

Fulgence — I am sad when they tell me you are gay.

Victorine — What ! do you want me to be in grief ?

Fulgence — Only you are never gay with me, Victorine : you keep that for other people.

Victorine — If you make me sad, it isn't my fault.

Fulgence [*crossing the stage to return a register to Antoine's desk*] — Oh ! no more is it mine.

Victorine — And whose fault is it, then ?

Fulgence [*aside*] — And to think I don't dare explain myself ! she has so sincere an air, so far removed from what's in my mind !

Victorine — Are you sulking at me ? Very well, I'll take my work. [*Seats herself at left.*

Fulgence — I sulking ! what a mean word you use to me !

Victorine — I was wrong, that's true ; I don't know why I said it to you. It wasn't in my mind.

Fulgence [*approaching her*] — Do you know your own real thoughts, Victorine ?

Victorine — Why — I think I do ! But — perhaps not always ! Come, I don't want to be conceited : I am not — what shall I say ? I am not like you, Fulgence.

Fulgence — Like me ?

Victorine — Well, yes. I am not sensible, rational, deliberate like you. I don't keep an account with myself in everything, as it seems to me you do. Perhaps I have been too much spoiled in this house, where everybody is so good to me ! They have always let me do and say whatever passed through my head. Then myself, I rather give up to my first impulses without being very well able to explain them. I am cheerful, I am sad, I laugh, I cry ; they make fun of it, my father laughs at me, and I laugh at myself too. [*Rising.*] Well, doesn't that reassure you ? Wouldn't they say that in return for everything good I torment you ? But I don't mean to ! I tell you all this, Fulgence, so you mayn't be uneasy about anything.

Fulgence — And yet there is one thing I can't help making me uneasy.

Victorine — Tell me, and if I can correct myself —

Fulgence — Oh, you haven't done anything wrong. You are frank and good, I know ; but you are so beloved and cosseted here, that I am afraid of not making you as happy as you always have been — afraid you will find me too rational, too deliberate, as you say.

Victorine — I have thought that sometimes myself; but I wasn't thinking so that minute. Why do you call it up to me? Wouldn't any one say you wanted to frighten me over the future? Certainly one doesn't marry without some apprehension — but you take my confidence away instead of giving it to me!

Fulgence — Ah, I am a bungler, I know. I can't make tender speeches, and I'm not used to this family life all sweetness, all honey, that has been made for you here. I am gloomy, disagreeable. You can't love me. Tell the truth, Victorine, you don't love me?

Victorine — Not love you? Here you are frightening me all through, Fulgence! Why do you tell me I don't love you?

Fulgence — Because I have never yet dared to ask you, and perhaps you haven't asked yourself.

Victorine — But surely I must love you, as I am going to marry you.

[*Antoine enters and listens to them.*

Fulgence — Oh, that's no answer!

Victorine — I think it is! My father likes you and esteems you; I esteem you, too, and I want to love you, since it is my father's will and desire.

Scene X.

Antoine [*entering by the rear with papers, stops to listen, then approaches them, and says*] — Victorine is right, and it's she just now that's the wisest of the two.

Fulgence — What, M. Antoine, then you were listening?

Antoine — Why not? I still have the right.

Victorine [*kissing him*] — Oh, you will always have it! I want you always to know all my thoughts and advise me about everything. Come, tell M. Fulgence that he doesn't know what he is saying.

Antoine — He is in love, and love makes one talk nonsense. You were talking nonsense yourself just now, Victorine; but now you've hit the truth. It isn't necessary for one to go mad with joy on getting married. It is a serious affair, and if only you each have a firm resolution to do your duty, it will all go well. Come, I'm going to tell you a surprise! Make believe not to know anything. M. and Mme. Vanderke, with their daughter, are here to congratulate you and make you wedding

presents. The presents are very costly, I am sure of that beforehand. Don't be affected by their price, but by the meaning put into them and the friendship they are proofs of.

Scene XI.

Enter by the rear M. *and* Mme. Vanderke *and their daughter* Sophie, *with a* Servant *carrying pasteboard boxes.*

Mme. Vanderke [*coming forward and kissing* Victorine] — My dear child, you are to marry a good youth. I am happy in your happiness, and I beg you to receive your wedding dress from my hand.

[*Takes a box from the servant and hands it to* Victorine.

Victorine — O madame, how good you are to think of me like that!

Vanderke — And I, my dear daughter, — for I consider you my daughter too, do you understand? — I don't offer millinery, I shouldn't know how to choose it, but I beg your acceptance of this little pocket-book.

Victorine [*taking the pocket-book*] — Oh, how handsome it is! — Thank you, monsieur. How beautifully it is bound! all gilt! See here, father! with my monogram on it!

[*Goes over to* Antoine, *puts the box on the table, gives him the pocket-book, and returns to thank* Vanderke.

Antoine [*opening the pocket-book*] — But, monsieur — this draft on your funds — it is too much! it is impossible! it is a dowry! [*Goes up to* Vanderke.

Fulgence [*aside*] — A dowry! I was sure of it!

Vanderke — Well, oughtn't I to assure your daughter's lot?

Antoine — But, monsieur, fifty thousand livres! No, no, it is too much! your own children —

Mme. Vanderke [*holding her daughter's hand*] — Antoine, you have no right to refuse. The entire family is associated in the intentions of its head.

Victorine [*with emotion*] — Oh, I didn't need that, M. Vanderke — madame! Sophie! you almost give me pain with this huge present! Do I need money here? don't you want me to live here any longer?

Mme. Vanderke — On the contrary, I count on your staying here as long as we live.

Victorine — Oh, in that case thank you, thank you!

Sophie — But look closely at your wedding dress ! I have added some laces and a small necklace, for I wanted to dress you out too. You were so happy in seeing me fine, three months ago on my wedding day. [*They go up to the table.*

Victorine [*opening the box and sitting down to look*] — Oh, goodness ! a watered silk, pearls, English point ! — but I shall never dare to wear all that !

Sophie [*handing her another box*] — And here are flowers, ribbons, and gloves from my husband, who will come on in two days to assist at your wedding.

Victorine — Ah, heaven, what fine things ! I shall be in white gloves all the rest of my life !

Mme. Vanderke — We leave you to look at these trifling fineries ; but we wish you, as well as your father and your intended, to come and breakfast with us, in order to fix the great day. — Do you hear, M. Fulgence ?

Fulgence [*starting out of a deep reverie*] — Madame — it is too much honor. [*Aside.*] A dowry !

Vanderke [*to his wife and daughter*] — Go on and wait for me, my dears. I will be with you in a moment with Antoine and Fulgence, whom I am taking to the store. I have to give some orders.

[*Goes out with* ANTOINE *and* FULGENCE, *right.*

Sophie — Are you coming, Victorine ? We are to breakfast in my room to-day, you know.

Victorine [*rising*] — Yes, yes, immediately, immediately. I'll put away and lock up all my treasures, and then follow you.

[MME. VANDERKE *goes out rear with her daughter, to whom she gives her arm.*

SCENE XII.

Victorine [*alone, standing beside the table*] — Watered silk ! pearls ! oh, how heavy they are ! they are fine, I'll answer for it. English point lace ! And money, a lot of money ! [*Picks up everything and lets it drop again.*] Oh, I shall be so rich, so handsome, so happy ! — and Fulgence loves me lots ! [*Grows sadder and sadder.*] And my father is so contented ! It's singular, I'm choking ! [*Sits down in Antoine's chair.*] Is it joy ? — I feel — oh, how bad it makes you feel to be contented like this !

Scene XIII.

Alexis [*without being seen at rear door*] — She's crying! Why, what is it? could she be in grief at being married? [*Approaching.*] If I thought so! [*Aloud.*] Victorine! are you crying!

Victorine [*rising, choked*] — Ah, good heavens, don't tell of it, don't tell of it! my father is so angry when I cry!

Alexis — Then you cry often?

Victorine — No, sometimes. [*Wiping her eyes.*] It's all over! it's nothing, there!

Alexis — But what ails you?

Victorine — Nothing.

Alexis — Do you cry for nothing?

Victorine — It seems so.

Alexis — Then you are a little out of your head?

Victorine [*smiling*] — Maybe.

Alexis — Fulgence —

Victorine — Well, Fulgence —

Alexis — Fulgence is kind, honest, well educated; he has a handsome face, he is young — he pleases you, doesn't he?

Victorine — Oh yes, he pleases me very well.

Alexis — In short, it isn't your marriage that's making you unhappy?

Victorine — Oh no, it hasn't any reason; but the idea of marriage always makes me want to cry. If it were with another, it would be the same thing.

Alexis — Truly?

Victorine — Truly!

Alexis [*aside, with a little sigh*] — Oh, well! [*Aloud.*] Come, my little Victorine, my little sister, you mustn't spoil your eyes; and besides, if you are sad as that, I shall not dare give you my congratulations and my present — for I have brought you mine in my turn. [*Looking at the pasteboard boxes and drawing a small one from his pocket.*] I see I have come last, but it is the fault of the workman who made me wait.

Victorine — You have brought me a trinket? Ah, that is something I can wear always — all the better!

Alexis — I shall be very proud of that, if it pleases you. Look!

Victorine [*opening the box*] — Oh, your watch! your beautiful repeater! the one that passed a night with me, the eve of

your duel! Ah, what a memory of sorrow — and of happiness too! for after that wretched night when I never closed an eye — because I knew you were going to fight — what a joy the next day to see you come back sound and safe! We were all so happy! Oh, I thank you for having thought of giving me that! But what will your sister say? for this is her present to you.

Alexis — And so I had one made exactly like it before giving you this. There, look! it's so my sister may not know —

Victorine — But still it wouldn't be right to deceive your sister.

Alexis [*starting to exchange the watches, says in a slightly reproachful tone*] — If it means nothing to you —

Victorine [*holding back the watch, sadly*] — If! — it means a great deal to me! I shall love the old one ever so much better — you left it in my care the night of the duel! You said to me, "You are not to give it up *except to me, to me, you understand?*" You wanted to leave it to me as a memento, in case you — Thank God I could give it back to you! But how are we to do? you ought not to create a separation with it — your sister is more than I am!

Alexis — Aren't you my sister too? Sophie isn't jealous of you! Wouldn't she approve the exchange if I should tell her?

Victorine — Oh, yes, the duel has stayed a secret between your father and you, between my father and me — and Fulgence. — Oh! so I can tell Fulgence that it is your alarm-watch!

Alexis [*slightly disturbed*] — Fulgence? — But — [*With sudden frankness.*] Why, yes, yes, certainly! why not? Come, take, take it, please!

Victorine [*fastening on the watch*] — Ah, how contented I am! There now, it seems to me I see you in seeing myself with that watch! [*Dances about joyfully.*

Alexis — So you're laughing now! Well, I'm quite contented myself to have brought back cheerfulness to you!

Scene XIV.

Antoine [*entering by the right with* Fulgence, *who goes straight to his high desk*] — In good spirits? Good enough, Victorine!

Victorine — See here, papa ! see here, Fulgence ! the beautiful watch M. Alexis has just given me. [FULGENCE *starts.*

Antoine — They are spoiling you, they are making you vain. You are wrong, M. Vanderke.

Alexis — Don't scold me. I am so pleased to see her laugh and dance ! Come, they are waiting for all four of us to a family breakfast : will you come ?

Victorine — Oh, how I shall make Madame laugh with my watch ! I'll make it strike all the quarters, all the minutes, till they tell me, " Victorine, you're making my head split."

Alexis — Will you give me your arm ?

Victorine — Yes, yes ; but I don't want to go before papa.

Antoine — Ladies always go first !

Victorine — I am not a lady : I won't go before my father !

Antoine — And if I won't go before M. Vanderke ?

Alexis — There's only one way of arranging it. Take my other arm, my dear Antoine, and we'll all three go out — as we can !

SCENE XV.

Fulgence [*alone, following them*] — This high spirits with him, this melancholy with me ! — these presents ! — this dowry ! Ah, doubt and anger are gnawing at my heart ! [*Goes out.*

ACT II.

Drawing-room at Vanderke's, Louis XIV. style ; fireplace at rear center ; left rear, door leading into an antechamber ; right rear, glass door opening on the garden. Left, first wing, a window, and a little forward of it a center-table and chairs. On each side of the stage, consoles with candelabra, first wing. Side doors in second wing.

SCENE I.

Vanderke [*entering left rear with papers in hand, to* ALEXIS] — No, my dear boy, I am not in pain, and as your sister asked us to pass the morning in her room, you will find me again here.

Alexis — If you need to be alone on account of some business that is bothering you —

Vanderke — Oh, in our calling there is always some subject of uneasiness. The Harris & Morrison house is giving me some apprehensions.

Alexis — Those Americans who opened considerable credits with you?

Vanderke — Yes. I was advised to look sharp, and still it was repugnant to me to shut off credit from honest men whom distrust might hasten ruin for. But I don't know why I talk to you about that: these are things not very refreshing to a young man thinking of having a good time, and besides, all foresight is of very little service here. It is weakness to fret yourself in advance over dangers that cannot be averted, and perhaps all human wisdom consists in knowing how to await good and evil with patience. Go and finish your meal, my boy.

Alexis — Allow me to remain with you, father: it is so rare that you have a leisure morning, and I see you so little. I am much in fault, after all: I ought to help you in your work, share your anxieties — and you have plenty of reason to find fault with my good times.

Vanderke — I find no fault with you, my boy: each age to its own. I think no harm of your wanting to see Paris [*to* MME. VANDERKE, *who enters at left rear*], and your mother shares my feeling — she who always sacrifices her own contentment to yours.

SCENE II.

Mme. Vanderke — Ah, you are talking of that Paris journey? He still desires it, then?

Alexis — I do desire it, I admit; and yet if I searched my mind thoroughly, perhaps I should still more desire to stay here.

Vanderke — We shall carefully refrain from trying to influence you. You desire to take the air of the world a little, as the saying is; you are like all young people, you blush to be still a provincial?

Alexis — No, father. A man is not a provincial when he is a lieutenant in the navy, and when at twenty-five he has already seen the two Indies. But they say that Paris sums up all the earth, and it seems to me that after having seen it, I should have no more anxiety to make the tour of the world.

Mme. Vanderke — You are free, my child, and however sweet your presence would be to me, no more than your father will I oppose journeys useful for your instruction. My health is reëstablished at last, thanks to your kind cares. And nevertheless, if Paris satiated your curiosity; if, after

having seen it, you could give up distant expeditions ! Ah ! I recall what anguish I suffered when the wind blew on our coasts or a cloud formed on the horizon.

Alexis — Poor dear mother ! You borrow so much trouble ! — Come, father, I must quit the navy and apply myself more seriously to your trade.

Vanderke — Then you are not converted to the ideas of your aunt the marquise, Mr. chevalier ?

Alexis — No, and every day I am converted to yours. I cannot blush for what confers honor on your name, and I wish to follow the career you walk in. You need me, since my sister has married a man of the gown, a stranger to our occupations. Come, come, I must get married, so as to become quiet, sedentary, attached to family life : everybody here will be happy over it, and I more than anybody else, I am certain.

Mme. Vanderke — Ah, if it were true !

Vanderke — We will think of that when you like. But it is not for me to hunt up a dowry for you : it is for you to hunt up a wife. I am not in favor of those marriages which are treated as a business, and which the heart, the consideration of domestic happiness, does not enter into. I know that love matches have a bad reputation ; but for myself [*taking his wife's hand*], I made one so happy that I understand no other.

Alexis — Oh, I am quite of your opinion, father, and fortune (we have enough of that!) will never decide me. I should fail in playing the wit and the fine gentleman: I feel my tastes to be simple and modest in style and fashion. I feel myself your son, and I am so proud of it that I shall have strength to bear the gibes of the stylish crowd. I am curious to see how that class set about ruining their family, their character, their health, their reputation, with so much pains and care, when it is so easy to be an honest man and a happy one ; and then I shall be impatient to return here to end my days calmly beside the woman who chooses me, handsome as my sister, good as my mother.

Vanderke — It is pretty soon to think of ending your days, boy. See the world first ! As you have the desire for it, it is because you feel the need of it. I prefer to have you see the world with your eyes rather than mine, and to have you know it before you shut yourself down to domestic life. Go to Paris ; we'll talk about the establishment on your return, if you are still of the same mind.

Alexis [*dreamily and undecidedly*] — Perhaps you are right, father. I am rather young — perhaps I should not be worthy of my happiness. And yet, when you were married, you were younger than I am, and you had no occasion to repent of it.

Vanderke — That is true: but I was poor, condemned to work; I wasn't a brilliant son of family, a spoiled child.

Scene III.

Enter by left rear Sophie, Victorine, Fulgence, Antoine, *chatting familiarly in groups.*

Sophie — We have talked a lot about marriage, toilette, balls; we have chattered passably, and yet we haven't decided anything still.

Mme. Vanderke — That is true, but we could not decide without your father.

Vanderke [*seating himself at right*] — Well, come then, Antoine, what is it that still delays the marriage of these children?

Antoine — Why, nothing, monsieur. Everything is ready. They are waiting till you fix the day.

Victorine — Oh, are they waiting to fix the day?

Alexis — One would say it put you out! Don't you know I am going to have a shower of rockets all through the town — to burn my ruffles, as my father said? Don't you want to set fire to the bouquet [*finest piece*]?

Victorine — Oh no! it would make me too much afraid.

Vanderke — Look here, to-day is the 27th.

Victorine — Already! I thought it was only the 25th.

Vanderke — It is the 27th. Let us fix the marriage for the 30th.

Antoine — The 30th be it!

Victorine — The 30th! a Friday! Oh, that is a bad day, that brings bad luck!

Mme. Vanderke — And besides, it's a fast day!

Victorine — And so is Saturday!

Vanderke — Well, let's put it over to Sunday, which will be the 2d of the month, five days from now.

Victorine — Five days! so soon!

Antoine — But it's got to be decided!

Fulgence [*who has been watching* Victorine] — Allow me, M. Antoine. [*To* Vanderke.] Pardon me, monsieur, but

Mlle. Victorine seems opposed to your urgency, and I would not wish imposed on her —

Vanderke — That is good of you, Fulgence ; it is devotion, submission. It is a proof of love that can be appreciated. Modesty must not be nagged, that is true. We must respect it, be tender with it, convince it.

Antoine — But, sir —

Vanderke [*rising*] — You should not meddle any more in this. But since on account of my son's near departure our plans must be settled to-day, let us leave this engaged couple together and take a walk in the garden. We shall be back directly, my dears, and you will tell us the day you have chosen by mutual agreement.

Sophie — That's right, father ; you always give advice and example of condescension to our sex.

Vanderke [*offering his arm to his wife*] — Respect what you love. I always find it such a comfort.

[*They go out into the garden.* VANDERKE *makes* ANTOINE *pass before him ; he goes with his wife ;* SOPHIE *follows them, and at the moment of disappearance signs to* ALEXIS *to come with his parents ;* ALEXIS, *whose eyes have been fixed on* VICTORINE, *makes her a sign of adieu and goes out.*

SCENE IV.

Fulgence — Come, listen, mademoiselle : you are very reluctant to take a husband — and I myself —

Victorine [*eagerly*] — Oh ! and so are you, aren't you ?

Fulgence — I — I was hiding my thoughts from you ; I hoped to stifle them, conquer them : but I am suffering too much, and to hold myself in any longer would be dissimulating with you. I don't want to, I ought not to. I love you, Victorine, certainly I love you ; so don't take what I'm going to tell you in bad part.

Victorine — Then tell it quickly !

Fulgence — I want — I don't want, certainly not, to give you up — and yet —

Victorine [*attentively*] — And yet —

Fulgence — And yet — I'd like to change something in your dreams of the future. If I were an unprincipled man, I could deceive you : pretend to submit to everything, and the day after the marriage say to you, "This is my will." But that

would be bad faith, you would hate me, and I should have deserved it. So I want to tell you in advance, and if it seems unacceptable to you — well, I will submit, I will suffer — I will renounce the happiness I had flattered myself with.

Victorine — And what would be your will if we were married?

Fulgence [*with an effort*] — It would be to quit this house, this Vanderke family, this country, and go and live with you in a foreign land, or at the other end of France.

Victorine [*quickly*] — Oh, that — never, never!

Fulgence — That is what I was afraid of, that is what I was certain of, that is what crushes me; but I would rather know what I can rely on.

Victorine — Oh, and so do I!

Scene V.

Antoine *and* Vanderke *reënter through the garden.*

Antoine — Huh! they're in the sulks! [*To* Vanderke.] I told you so, monsieur — that they wouldn't come to any understanding.

Vanderke — Is that so? Come, children, we are here to try and bring you into accord.

Victorine — Oh, M. Vanderke, we are entirely in accord: we can't marry each other, that's all.

Antoine [*growls*] — Oh, see that! that's something new!

Victorine — Don't let's dispute over it: it doesn't make us enemies. He has nothing to reproach me with, and I have no grudge at all against him. He is frank, and so am I, that's how it is.

Antoine — But good Lord! what's the matter? Will you explain yourself, Fulgence?

Fulgence — M. Antoine, it is very painful in M. Vanderke's presence.

Vanderke [*gently*] — If it is necessary, I will go away.

Victorine [*holding him back*] — No, monsieur, no! you are the head, the judge, the father, the master, for everybody here. I want him to say before you what he said to me — for I'll say it myself!

Fulgence — You are right, mademoiselle; and since there is no more hope — [*To* Vanderke, *firmly.*] Monsieur, I do not intend to remain in your service if I marry Mlle. Victorine.

Victorine — Do you hear that? He wants to leave you, he wants to make me leave my country, my family, your house where I was born, where I was brought up, where I feel in my own house, I am so happy. He would carry me far off, far off from you, from my father, from Madame — from Sophie! In short, he would make me die of grief, and it isn't what was agreed with my father; it isn't what was accepted. He recognizes it, and consequently our marriage is broken off.

Antoine [*who has been watching* FULGENCE *and* VICTORINE *and become gloomy*] — Softly, my girl, not so fast! Your marriage can't be broken off like that. It is written that the wife shall leave her father and her mother to follow her husband, and you'll follow yours if it is the will of yours!

Victorine — Leave Mr. Vanderke's family and house? leave you, father? Oh, you wouldn't have me!

Antoine — You won't be leaving me by that — I'll follow you.

Victorine [*clinging to* VANDERKE'S *arm*] — You would leave M. Vanderke? — Oh, monsieur, monsieur, my father can't leave you! you couldn't do without my father!

Vanderke [*who has also become very attentive to the faces of* FULGENCE *and* ANTOINE] — M. Fulgence, will you tell me honestly why you wish to leave my house, and the very country I live in, as if you had a horror of the friendship I evince towards you, and the services I can render you? Explain yourself clearly, and have no fear that I shall take offense at your reasons, if they are good ones.

Fulgence — Monsieur, if I were to remain a boy, there is nowhere I should be better off than with you. I render homage to your character; but shall I fail in the respect I owe you if I keep my reasons to myself?

Vanderke — Certainly you have that right, but I appeal to your confidence. — Antoine and Victorine, leave me alone with him. But don't go far away, for I may want to speak to you directly.

Antoine — Oh, monsieur, and I want to speak to this young lady, too!

[*Takes* VICTORINE'S *arm in his own rather roughly, and goes out into the garden with her.* VICTORINE *casts a look of distress at* VANDERKE.

Scene VI.

Vanderke [*to* Fulgence, *who is somewhat abstracted*] — Well, here we are alone, Fulgence, and I think it will do you good to open your heart and ask advice of a man double your age, and perhaps better able to judge of certain things in life.

Fulgence — Ah, M. Vanderke, your kindness touches me — I believe in your wisdom — but don't insist — no! I can't tell you anything.

Vanderke — Then I'll try to guess. Your position here may seem too unimportant, and you are afraid of not being able to raise a family on the wages —

Fulgence — No, monsieur, no! That is what mortifies me, that you should suspect me of interested views, when it is just the contrary, when I am ashamed — and, I must say, disquieted, — wounded, at the dowry you have given Victorine to-day.

Vanderke [*studying him attentively*] — Disquieted! wounded! why so? Don't you know that Antoine has been my servant, my companion, and my friend for thirty years? that we have suffered and struggled together? that he has given me a thousand proofs of his fidelity and his virtue? and finally, that in a duel my son had, he wished to attack his adversary and get killed, to force the other to fly the country? You think it surprising, disquieting to your *honor* [*dwelling on the word*], that I give a modest dower to such a man's daughter.

Fulgence [*aside*] — My honor! He seems to read my very thoughts.

Vanderke — Well, have you no answer? What is there extraordinary in it?

Fulgence [*shaken*] — Nothing, monsieur; oh, certainly, nothing! I am too proud — but what can I say to you? [*bitterly*] benefits humiliate me!

Vanderke — The worse for you! I don't like to have my good intentions distrusted without cause.

Fulgence — Without cause!

Vanderke — Then tell what your distrust is about, come!

Fulgence — I — I have no distrust of you, monsieur: that would be ingratitude, I feel it. But what's the use! I can't change myself. I would rather my wife should owe her comfort, the pleasures of her youth and the security of her old age, to me alone. I would rather be her one support, her sole friend! I was born jealous! — yes, I am so of what I love, and I am so

in what seems to you perhaps the most insignificant things. I don't know whether I should ever dare to call Victorine *thou*, I respect her so much; and here everybody indulges in that familiarity. In a word, she is so cosseted and beloved in this house, that her affections could never concentrate themselves on me, and I should be full of secret rage at not being the only one devoted to her happiness.

Vanderke — I understand you, monsieur, I understand you perfectly.

Fulgence — And do you blame me?

Vanderke — Not at all. Exclusive and absolute tenderness is the most sacred right of love and marriage. I shall not try, then, to turn you aside from your resolutions; but the young Victorine ought to love you enough to accept them without regret. I advise you, then, to delay your marriage with her until you can inspire her with confidence enough in you to accept them with joy and devotion.

Fulgence — Ah, monsieur! you have saved me! I thank you, I bless you, and I will follow your advice.

[VANDERKE *gives him his hand;* FULGENCE *presses it with emotion, bowing slightly, but without giving himself up completely.*

SCENE VII.

Antoine [*reëntering by way of the garden*] — Well, monsieur?

Vanderke — Well, Antoine, I think the marriage will have to be delayed.

Antoine — Pardon me, pardon me, M. Vanderke, you do everything for the best; but you don't know all the circumstances. Victorine, whom I have just been talking seriously with, has listened to reason. She loves Fulgence well enough to consent to everything: she will be married next Sunday, she will go off with him the week after. I have promised to follow her and settle her wherever it will be convenient for her husband to fix, and then come back and put your affairs in order, so I can go and live near my daughter and my son-in-law.

Fulgence — Good heavens! Is this true, M. Antoine?

Vanderke — Fulgence, go back to work. Be calm, control your emotions. We shall see each other again soon.

[FULGENCE *goes out by the antechamber.*

Scene VIII.

Vanderke [*with emotion*] — Antoine, then you want to leave me too?

Antoine — Leave you? Never! at least not unless you drive me out.

Vanderke — Then you are deceiving your daughter?

Antoine — I've got to! If I didn't promise to go and live near her, she'd never follow her husband.

Vanderke — So her greatest, her truest sorrow would be to separate from her father?

Antoine — Beyond question, for after my promise she made no further resistance.

Vanderke — But have you weighed well the reasons that Fulgence thinks he has for leaving us? Do you know them?

Antoine [*uneasily*] — No.

Vanderke — And yet you would seem to understand them perfectly, as you have yielded to them without even asking for them.

Antoine [*embarrassed*] — What can I do, so long as it's his notion? You can get him a place in some solid mercantile house where he'll make a good living; he won't be so free or happy there as he is here, but so long as it's his notion!

Vanderke [*watching him closely*] — You take your part in this separation, the absence of your daughter, very lightly.

Antoine [*sadly*] — Pshaw! so long as it's Victorine's notion!

Vanderke — Oh, it isn't Victorine's notion: it's yours, Antoine.

Antoine [*rather impatiently*] — Well, so long as it's my notion!

Vanderke — Antoine, you don't wish to tell me anything, but I know it all.

Antoine [*disturbed*] — You know, you know — What is it you know? There's nothing to know, confound it. There's nothing, nothing!

Vanderke — There is this — that Fulgence is jealous. Isn't that anything?

Antoine — Has he told you he's jealous? He doesn't know what he's talking about! He can't be jealous! And who could it be of? Who did he say?

Vanderke — He has said nothing, but I understood; I ought to have understood sooner, guessed, foreseen. You

ought to have foreseen and guessed sooner, too! Antoine, you love me too well!

Antoine — What? How so?

Vanderke — Yes, rather than enlighten my perceptions, you would let me be an ingrate to you!

Antoine [*in grief*] — I don't understand you, but I see you are finding fault with me because I care more for you than for anybody else in the world, and that isn't right on your part.

Vanderke — You ought not to care more for me than for your daughter: you have more sacred duties toward her than toward me; you are responsible to God for her virtue and her happiness, much more than for my interests and my peace of mind.

Antoine — Well, in short, you mean to tell me —

Vanderke — I shall tell you nothing, since you have secrets from me! I shall speak to —

Antoine — To my daughter? Oh no, don't! please don't! Not a word that can make Victorine think you or I could have that in mind.

Vanderke [*in surprise*] — I had no intention of talking to Victorine. It is my son I am going to question sharply.

Antoine — Your son! Is that your idea? You mean to talk to him — to set him thinking — to make him guess —? Oh no! oh no! he mustn't have the least idea —

Vanderke — Why, of what?

Antoine [*embarrassed*] — Of — of what you are thinking of!

Vanderke — Of Fulgence's jealousy?

Antoine [*quickly*] — Yes, yes, that's it, of Fulgence's jealousy. It's crazy, just crazy, and if we mix ourselves up in it we shall make it worse.

Vanderke — Then my son has not noticed it?

Antoine — How should he have noticed it? Is it his fault if M. Fulgence is jealous?

Vanderke — And Victorine —?

Antoine [*with an effort*] — No more does Victorine suspect it.

Vanderke — That fully proves that my son has never spoken a word to her that could make her think he looked on her with other eyes than a brother's. Still, Victorine has a great deal of melancholy!

Antoine [*carrying back to right rear the fauteuil which was at the front on the same side*] — Oh, if she is melancholy, it's bad;

but people don't die of that! You'd spoil her for me if I let you do it! She must leave here, indeed she must!

Vanderke — She must? One moment! It hasn't been proved to me yet — Go and find Alexis for me.

Antoine — What are you going to do?

Vanderke — You will see! Go on, go ahead!

[*Antoine hesitatingly goes out into the garden.*

Scene IX.

Vanderke [*alone*] —No, my son is not guilty, but perhaps — feelings which neither he nor Victorine admit to themselves— if Antoine should be blind! that excellent man is as devoted to me as a faithful dog! That is beautiful, it is good, but it is more than any man owes to one like himself; too much affection may mislead the judgment, and I ought not to leave the decision here to any one but myself —

Scene X.

Antoine *enters first, followed by* Alexis.

Antoine — Here is your son. Ought I —

Vanderke [*standing, leaning against a console*] — You ought to hear what I have to say to him. [*Antoine remains at the rear, leaning against the fireplace, watching* Vanderke *and* Alexis *with a sort of stupor.* Vanderke, *to* Alexis.] My dear boy, the business I talked with you about just now will have serious consequences, and I think you can help me conjure them away.

Alexis — Command me, father! Here I am, all ready.

Vanderke — Then set out for Paris this very instant.

Alexis [*trembling*] — This very instant?

Vanderke [*with mild gravity*] — Do you hesitate? Is it displeasing to you?

Alexis — Hesitate to obey you? Never! but I was not prepared to leave you to-day, so abruptly! — I will go and make my preparations.

Vanderke [*meaningly*] — Take nothing but a valise: you will be sent all you need for the whole time of your sojourn in Paris.

Alexis — For the entire time? Do you insist on my remaining a long time, father?

Vanderke — My business and your enjoyments will take fully two months. Didn't you count on staying there two months?

Alexis — I have been thinking it would be very long away from my mother and away from you!

Vanderke — Have you any particular reason for modifying your projects so? [*Significantly, and going up to him.*] If there were, you would let me know it, me first? — me, who am, and always want to be, your best friend?

Alexis — Oh, certainly, father: you alone.

Vanderke — Think it over. I will make out your letters of credit, and if you have something to say to me, you will find me here directly.

[*Goes out slowly by rear door, and turns back before disappearing, to look at* ALEXIS *and* ANTOINE.

SCENE XI.

Antoine [*starting to follow* VANDERKE] — I'll go and pack your valise.

Alexis [*stopping him*] — Antoine, what ails Victorine?

Antoine — Why do you ask that, monsieur?

Alexis — Because I just saw her going into the garden with my sister; her eyes were brimming with tears, and she wouldn't speak a word to me.

Antoine — Pshaw! Victorine is like all girls. Don't you see her cry for the least thing? for a little impatience I have shown with her, for a kiss your sister has forgotten to give her, for a bird flown away, for a lost ribbon — what can I do? she is such a child!

Alexis — Yes, she was crying the other day over a ribbon I had brought her and you had taken away, so she declares.

Antoine [*annoyed*] — Lord, yes! see there! a fringed ribbon, as if she ought to wear fringes! She is such a coquette!

[*Makes a step to leave;* ALEXIS *places himself in front and detains him.*

Alexis — No, Antoine, Victorine is not in the least a coquette.

Antoine [*meaningly, and coming forward again*] — She has become one since she has had a lover.

Alexis [*coming over to* ANTOINE] — Then she is very much in love?

Antoine — Why, it is quite permissible for a sober girl to love her lover!

Alexis — If you were mistaken — if —

Antoine — That's nobody's affair but mine, M. Alexis!

Alexis — That is true — but the interest I bear —

Antoine — All right, all right, monsieur; thank you.

Alexis — You have nothing to thank me for: it is my duty. You are so devoted to us! Your family is mine — it is but one, one same family! Victorine's unhappiness would be yours, and consequently our own!

Antoine — But Victorine won't be unhappy, monsieur: I answer to you for it.

Alexis — No doubt, if she loves Fulgence. You know him well, of course?

Antoine — You know as well as I do that he is a perfectly honorable man.

Alexis — I was absent when he came here. Has it been — has it been a long time that Victorine has had an affection for him?

Antoine — M. Alexis! — a young girl's feelings — that is so delicate a matter that I, her father, should never dare ask her the questions you ask me. It is my duty to guess them — and encourage them when I think them well placed. Victorine is surer of herself than she seems, and I know very well she doesn't wish any other husband than the one I have given my word to.

Alexis — Quite so. Pardon me, Antoine, if I have been indiscreet. At the moment of leaving you, as I shall not assist at Victorine's marriage — shall not be here any longer to take part in the joys or the sadnesses of the family — it was perhaps allowable to witness my solicitude.

Antoine — I am grateful for it, monsieur, very grateful. I like you very much, you know it! I am sorry you are going off so soon, but — it must be very necessary, since your father says so, and — you will soon be weaned away from us, thank God!

Alexis — Not so much as you think, perhaps!

Antoine — Pshaw! pshaw! you'll see so many fine things, and high flyers! You'll go to shows and promenades; you'll have your men and your horses! Ah, you'll be pointed out, though! And there are not so many young fellows with as handsome a face as yours, down there!

Alexis [*sadly*] — Good Antoine! Come, I'll go and get my father's orders, since I've got to leave. [*Goes out at left rear.*

Scene XII.

Antoine [*alone*] — And Monsieur who would have encouraged him to stay! Monsieur who would have consented — Ah, my master, what a man you are! It doesn't make me love you more, for that isn't possible; but it makes me still firmer in my duty! To abuse such goodness! I'd rather — I'd rather die of grief!

Scene XIII.

Enter Sophie *and* Victorine, *from the garden.*

Sophie — Oh, I was going to look for you, Antoine! I don't know what ails Victorine; I can't console her. She is in trouble, I see, great trouble! Come, Victorine, tell your father now why you are crying.

Antoine [*low, to* Victorine, *taking her aside, front wing*] — Have you told her you were going away? I forbade you to!

Victorine — No, no, I haven't said anything about it!

Antoine — And don't tell it to-morrow either!

Sophie — Why, Antoine, are you scolding her instead of consoling her?

Antoine — Crotchets, babyishness! Pardon me, madame, I have not time — Monsieur needs me. [*Aside, as he goes out.*] Oh, everybody weakens, and I don't know who to listen to! [*Goes out at rear door.*

Scene XIV.

Sophie — Well, you won't insist, then? Ah! I admire your submission, I should rather say your weakness, your indifference.

Victorine — Oh, mademoiselle!

Sophie — In the first place, I am no longer mademoiselle, and I will never be "madame" to you. I am Sophie, Sophie whom you love very little, whom you don't love at all any more, since you love that Fulgence so much!

Victorine — Good heavens! I am doing my best to love him, and you know very well that —

Sophie — That what? Answer me now! If you don't love him, you mustn't marry him. Ah! if I had not loved my husband, I never would have let myself make the change: too much submission to our parents may lead us to make unhappiness even for them. Do you think your father would be satisfied if he saw you desperate, perhaps guilty?

Victorine — Guilty! I guilty?

Sophie — Yes, one can become that when she doesn't love her husband. She may love in spite of herself.

Victorine — Another — another, but I shouldn't love another — what are you telling me, Sophie?

Sophie — I don't want you to let yourself be sacrificed, and you won't defend yourself at all!

Victorine — But since my father says it must be —

Scene XV.

Enter M. *and* Mme. Vanderke *and* Alexis *by door at left.*

Mme. Vanderke [*to her husband*] — What, my dear, you are hastening our boy's departure? He isn't to assist at Victorine's marriage, which was going to be a festival!

Vanderke — Forgive me for causing you sorrow, but it is business where honor is engaged.

Sophie [*stupefied*] — My brother going?

[Victorine *is petrified.*

Alexis — Yes, my dear sister — yes, mother, I am going. My father wishes it, and I ought not to regret anything when I have the happiness of being able to be of use to him.

Mme. Vanderke — Well, come and kiss me then! You are a good boy!

Sophie — But you won't be absent long?

Vanderke — He will be away perhaps two months.

Victorine — Two months!

Alexis [*seeing* Antoine *enter carrying a valise and* Alexis' *cloak and hat*] — Everything is ready, father: you have no more orders to give me?

Vanderke — You will stop one day at Beauvais with M. Surmont, who will advise you as to the business I talked with you about, and if necessary you can send me an express — a reliable man.

Alexis — Good-by, father. [*Embraces him and then goes to the others.*] My dear mother, my dear Sophie.

Mme. Vanderke — We'll go with you as far as your carriage.

Alexis — Well, Victorine, aren't you going to say anything to me? Are you sulking at me? Ah, if I lack words, it is wholly in spite of myself. Come, give me your hand. I shall find you married on my return.

Victorine — Ah, monsieur, I shall not be here any more, I shall never see you any more!

Alexis — What are you saying? You are dreaming!

Antoine — You know very well she is crazy!

Alexis — What! are you actually out of your head, Victorine? Answer me now, come, are you going to make up a face like that for me? Do you think I don't need any courage, every time I leave such good parents, and our dear house where every one is so nice — and you who are so charming when you don't pout? Good-by again, mother. [VANDERKE *makes a sign to him.*] Yes, yes, father, I'm going. You'll write to me, Sophie? Antoine, you'll tell me all about the marriage? Come! [*To* VICTORINE.] Come, smile at me. You see very well I'm whistling to keep my courage up so as to get strength to leave. Be a little cheerful for me, so I may find consolation telling myself you are contented. [*Abstractedly taking his cloak, which* ANTOINE, *uneasy and impatient, has been offering him for some moments.*] There, think of your silk dress, of your necklace, of your watch, and on your wedding day you can think of my aunt the marquise, and you can have your train carried by the little negro boy I brought back. Laugh, now — now laugh a little — There, altogether!

Victorine [*with a nervous laugh*] — Yes, yes, I'll laugh heartily — I'll make myself very handsome — I'll think of you — of your aunt — I'll give myself airs — I'll have a negro! — Mlle. Sophie will write you everything — and you'll laugh down there — you'll laugh, won't you?

Alexis — See her laughing! that's fine! Thank you, Victorine. Good-by, good-by, all!

Mme. Vanderke — Let us follow you!

[*All go out except* VICTORINE *and* SOPHIE, *who come forward again.*

SCENE XVI.

VICTORINE *keeps on laughing with a wandering air; then sobs, screams, and falls in a faint on the fauteuil, at the left near the center-table.* SOPHIE *instantly runs forward to her.*

Sophie — Good heavens! what is it? Victorine! ah, then I wasn't mistaken? And he's gone! [*Lifts up* VICTORINE.

ACT III.

Scene: SOPHIE'S *room. Same decoration as second act. It is night outside. The drawing-room is lit by candles placed on brackets.*

SCENE I.

Present: VANDERKE *and* SOPHIE.

Sophie [*seated near the center-table, working tapestry*] — Ah, father, if on the eve of my wedding I had been as melancholy and agitated as she has been for a week, you would never have consented —

Vanderke [*seated on the other side of the center-table*] — My dear child, the circumstances are different, and the characters still more so. You combine firmness with gentleness ; while Victorine is weak and irresolute.

Sophie — But if my brother —

Vanderke — What ! your brother ?

Sophie — Ah, father dear, you understand me quite well, for you made him go away.

Vanderke — Take care, my dear — take care of what you think and of what you say.

Sophie — Then would it be a crime on my brother's part to love Victorine, and madness on mine to believe that you would consent ?

Vanderke — My dear Sophie, it isn't one of the marriages unequal before God. A subordinate like Antoine is a friend, and I have brought you up with the idea that Victorine was your companion and your equal.

Sophie — Well then, father ?

Vanderke — Well, my child, the world, which has sound and estimable beliefs, common to all classes of society, has also empty and cruel prejudices which it is fine to combat ; but to combat them, one must be strong. Your brother will be so one day, I am confident ; but he is still very young and hardly knows himself. I know that a great passion, a noble love, inspire mighty devotions ; but this great passion your brother has never experienced.

Sophie — And yet there has been a real change in him since the day when the question of marrying Victorine was brought

up. Until then, he did not care for her except in the way of friendship. From the day when she was promised to Fulgence, my brother has kept talking about leaving the navy, of getting married ; he has had a craving to go away, a craving to stay here, a need to see Paris to distract himself — need of opening his heart to you — I have seen it all !

Vanderke — But in place of opening his heart, he has gone away. Even if we admit that he had some fleeting thought of love for Victorine, he has stifled it ; and not feeling himself very seriously enamored, he has obeyed the voice of honor which commanded him to depart. [*Rises.*

Sophie — That is true. Ah, my poor Victorine !

Scene II.

Antoine [*entering from the anteroom with a flat candlestick in his hand*] — Pardon me, madame, if I take the liberty of disturbing Monsieur even as far as your room ; but this is a letter for him that I have just found on my desk, and that seems pressing.

Sophie [*rising and going toward her chamber door, which is that at the left*] — Read it, read it, father ! Stay here, Antoine : I am going into my chamber to attend Victorine.

[*Goes out.* Antoine *extinguishes his candle and puts the candlestick on the mantel at rear.*

Scene III.

Vanderke [*preoccupied, holding his letter without looking at it*] — Well, Antoine, are all the preparations for the wedding finished ?

Antoine —Yes, monsieur. At nine precisely, to-morrow morning, we shall go to the church. Ah ! I wish we had already come back !

Vanderke — You are very urgent !

Antoine — It is because Fulgence is more agitated than you think : he is very cross this evening.

Vanderke — But since Victorine is to go away with him, what else does he want ? That Fulgence is too exacting also.

Antoine — Exacting or not, there's no more drawing back.

Vanderke — Yet if the marriage were the worst of misfortunes for Victorine ?

Antoine — No, monsieur, I have confidence in her, in myself, in God above all ; and then I have my own experience. When

I married her mother, she didn't care very much for me — my brusque manners frightened her ; but I loved her so much that I was able to make her very happy, and she died blessing me, as you know.

Vanderke — Yes, she was the model of wives and mothers. But you were not jealous, were you ?

Antoine — Indeed I was, monsieur.

Vanderke — But you didn't let her see it ?

Antoine — Yes, indeed I did sometimes. Come, come, I tell you Victorine will love her husband, as her mother loved me, with my merits and my faults. But read your letter, monsieur. Is it urgent, as it seemed to be ?

Vanderke [*looking at the letter*] — Yes, it says so on the address ; that doesn't make it so.

Antoine — It can be soon read. Business before everything.

Vanderke [*approaching the candles, and after having read the letter*] — My son's writing ? Yes ! It is disguised in the address. [*Turns over the letter.*] But still it is his handwriting. Antoine ! pretty serious news ! Look !

Antoine [*reading near the right-hand bracket*] — "Harris & Morrison have failed ; I hope to announce it to you in time for you to get in shape." Well, are you no more stirred up than that, monsieur ?

Vanderke — I was expecting it.

Antoine — But six hundred — pshaw ! seven or eight hundred thousand livres have got to be found within forty-eight hours, perhaps.

Vanderke [*calmly*] — They will be found : it was all foreseen.

Antoine — Ah, monsieur, and you told me nothing about it !

Vanderke — What was the good ? You had bother enough with your domestic affairs.

Antoine — My affairs are nothing when yours are in question.

Vanderke — But who brought this letter ?

Antoine — I didn't see anybody. I found it on my desk not ten minutes ago.

Vanderke — Surely a courier came here ?

Antoine — I'll hunt him up and bring him to you.

Vanderke — In my private room, you know. My family mustn't suspect anything.

Antoine — Make yourself easy on that.

[VANDERKE *goes out by door at left.*

SCENE IV.

Enter FULGENCE *stealthily by the door from the garden, greatly agitated.*

Antoine [*to himself, taking up his bedroom candle, which he relights at the candelabrum on the bracket*] — Where can that devil of a man have gone? I'll bet he's in the stable on a pile of hay. He must have run a mad race. — Ah, Fulgence, did you see him?

Fulgence — Did you?

Antoine [*candle in hand, turning toward the exit*] — No. Where is he?

Fulgence — I'm looking for him.

Antoine — He must be in the kitchen or the stable.

Fulgence — M. Alexis Vanderke in the kitchen or the stable?

Antoine — And who is talking to you about M. Alexis Vanderke? Would it be himself?

Fulgence — I don't know anything about it. I'm asking you.

Antoine — There's a sharp fellow! Are we playing at cross purposes? Come, come, I've no time to waste on nonsense! Come and help me hunt for the courier.

[*Goes back up toward the garden door.*

Fulgence [*ironically*] — Oh, it's a courier?

Antoine [*impatiently*] — Yes, a courier that brought a dispatch, one that monsieur wants to speak to, and that I haven't seen yet. Is that clear?

Fulgence — M. Antoine, you take a nice tone with me!

Antoine — Ha, Lord! it's you that take a nice tone.

Fulgence — I am not your son-in-law yet, monsieur, and I have a right to be uneasy! I'm playing for a big stake here. I'm playing for my honor.

Antoine — Oh, how much patience a man needs! Are you crazy, Fulgence? what has your honor got to do with the arrival of a man that brings a letter here? All right, I'll go myself —

Fulgence — You know very well you suspected something too!

Antoine — Go to the devil, I don't any longer!

Fulgence — Very well, monsieur! And on my part, I tell you that your impatiences don't impose on me. I tell you that a man who is hiding himself, a man wrapped up in a cloak, a man the dogs know, for they don't bark, a man who slips into the house like a ghost —

Antoine [*shrugging his shoulders; he is near the exit into the anteroom*] — Perhaps a thief? Come on, quick!

Fulgence [*ironically*] — Joke, do you? Take care, M. Antoine, you may find out something you don't want to know!

Antoine [*aside*] — The lunatic makes me afraid! Could it be possible? No! [*Aloud, coming forward.*] See here, Fulgence, will you tell me once for all, the first and the last time, what you suspect, and what makes you so cross-grained and crabbed on the eve of your marriage.

Fulgence — Well, yes, I will tell you, although you know it very well, and your question isn't frank. I'll tell you because I am not used to suffering so! I was at peace. I was industrious. I was cold. I didn't know what it was to love. There, I believe I wasn't born to love! To love, you must have confidence, and I haven't. Why should you give me your daughter? Why should your daughter receive a dowry to marry a man who has nothing? Why were you so urgent to celebrate the marriage? Why should M. Alexis Vanderke leave the house the moment I suspected him? and if he is back in it this evening in secret, what is he here to do?

Antoine [*who has listened with an anxious and troubled face, and now replaces his candlestick on the table with such angry violence that he puts out the candle*] — Ah, how lucky it is for you that I've been jealous, absurd too, in my time! But for that, these suspicions of yours are things I wouldn't take with so much patience! But it's a disease! [*Coming forward to* FULGENCE *and growing heated little by little, despite the effort he makes at the beginning of the explanation to keep his temper.*] Fulgence! I give you my daughter because I want her to marry an honest man. I am urgent for consummation because I know you will esteem Victorine as she deserves when you know her better. M. Vanderke gives her a dowry because he loves me. Does that dowry afflict you? So much the better! we'll put it back in his coffers without saying a word! [*Aside.*] Which perhaps will be none too much just at this moment. [*Aloud.*] The junior M. Vanderke went away because — yes,

I'll tell you the whole truth — because his father saw your jealousy and removed him out of kindness to you — to me. If he is back here this evening (which I don't believe), it is because he wanted to bring his father in person an interesting piece of news you'll know very soon. And if he is hiding from me — but you've dreamed that, and as it's impossible, I don't have to seek for the cause !

[*Starts to relight his candle at the chandelier on the table, shrugging his shoulders.*

Fulgence [*with great bitterness*] — The explanation closes my mouth. It orders me to be good-naturedly ignorant of what is going on here. It authorizes you to go on the quest of discovery all alone. Go ahead, then ; as for me, I'll go on my own hook, I'd very humbly have you know.

Antoine — All right ! but I tell you very plainly you've got a wooden head. [*Goes out by the garden.*

Scene V.

Fulgence [*alone*] — Yes, yes ! if he isn't a dupe, that M. Antoine, he's cunning. We shall see, though ! — Ah, Victorine ! There are moments when I hate her even more than I love her, and when I'd like to be her master already to have the right to make her suffer ! Frightful passion, frightful punishment, jealousy is ! I feel that I'm growing wicked, and shall make two victims of her and myself ! I should do better to break off ; but they'll say I'm outraging her — dishonoring her. I must go and explore the garden : it's there the phantom must have taken refuge.

[*Starts to go out into the garden, but stops on seeing* Sophie *leaving her chamber on the left.*

Scene VI.

Sophie [*in surprise*] — Why, what are you doing here, M. Fulgence ?

Fulgence — Nothing, madame : I came to look for M. Antoine, and I'm going back.

[*Makes a movement to go out by the garden.*

Sophie [*showing him anteroom door*] — This way, please.

[Fulgence *goes out.*

Scene VII.

[*Sophie alone*] — What a look of menace and hate! I can't bear that fellow! What was he looking toward the garden for? [*Raises the curtain.*] He is always spying, he is spying everywhere! [*Opens the glass door, and quickly closes it.*] A man with a cloak! I'm afraid! Pshaw! it's my father — perhaps my husband, who has come to surprise me. [*Turns to open it again.*] Oh, good gracious! is it you, brother?

[*Kisses her brother, as he enters wrapped in a cloak.*

Scene VIII.

Alexis — Yes, it is I, my dear sister: I may be discovered in the garden, for it seems to me they are looking for me there, and I've come to take shelter with you. I don't want to be seen.

Sophie — You don't want to be seen?

Alexis — No, Sophie; shut the doors, please.

[*He shuts the garden door, and* Sophie *that of the anteroom.*

Sophie — But tell me quick —

Alexis [*going toward the door at left*] — And here nobody can hear us? Your husband?

Sophie — He won't be here till to-morrow; if you're afraid of being surprised — why, here, you can shut yourself up in his room. [*Indicates door at right.*] But why all this mystery? What's the matter?

Alexis — Nothing — business news I learned at Beauvais, and my father had directed me to get information — I wanted — I had no right to trust anybody but myself with the task of bringing it. Do you know whether he got this evening a letter that was laid on Antoine's desk?

Sophie — Yes, I saw Antoine bring it to him. But why write to him? why not see him?

Alexis — I wanted to wait till everybody in the house was abed; I don't want to see any one but him. I couldn't get to my room. Fulgence was at my heels.

Sophie — Oh! it may be wrong of you to hide so.

Alexis — Perhaps it was still more wrong of me to come back! — But I haven't come back, Sophie. I'll just come in, kiss you, and go away. [*Lays down his cloak and hat.*

Sophie — Thank you for that mark of affection. But have you something special to say to me?

Alexis [*troubled*] — Oh, nothing in particular! By the way, is the marriage celebrated?

Sophie — Victorine's marriage?

Alexis — Yes, Victorine's marriage.

Sophie — And suppose it was?

Alexis — Well, that would change nothing in my resolution to go away this very instant. My carriage is waiting outside the town, and I want to be on the road back to Paris before dawn. Then the marriage is celebrated! It ought to be!

Sophie — And suppose it wasn't?

Alexis — It isn't? Tell me, Sophie, it isn't?

Sophie — It will be to-morrow morning.

Alexis — Absolutely?

Sophie — There is no question of breaking it off.

Alexis [*shaking his gloves with an indifferent air, and avoiding his sister's gaze*] — And Victorine? is she sad? is she cheerful? will she be happy?

Sophie — Ah, who can answer for the future?

Alexis — That is true. And myself — what do I know of mine. I hardly thought of it when I wanted to go away — to see the world! and then, at the last moment, I regretted I had not some more reasonable project.

Sophie — Then why didn't you tell this regret to my father?

Alexis — It was too late.

Sophie — Why so?

Alexis — Ah, Sophie, it is perfectly useless at present for me to confess!

Sophie [*turning toward* ALEXIS, *who is walking to and fro agitatedly, a little behind her*] — See here! Can it be marriage you have in mind? Are you in love? Whatever your resolutions may be, my father will approve them the day you tell him, "I love tenderly, seriously, and for my whole life."

Alexis — Do I quite know whether I love enough to dare use such a speech? My own heart has become an enigma to me. I hesitate, I shake off my thoughts, I suffer. But so far from encouraging me, it seems as if people busied themselves taking away all hope from me. Then I force myself to forget, I distract myself, and after all, perhaps that is the only sensible thing I have to do henceforth, since I am not loved!

Sophie — Ah, you are uncertain, you feel that you can easily recover, you don't wish to give all your heart without being assured of a return? When we love for good and all, we don't ask whether we shall be happy. We love because we love, that's all! And you don't love, brother! [*Rises.*] Come, don't think any more about it, and don't compromise others' future, since you leave to chance the one you might create for yourself. Go away as soon as every one is abed. I won't tell anybody I have seen you.

Alexis — My father will perhaps disapprove of my having come —

Sophie — Perhaps. And so do I. But some one is coming: hide!

Alexis [*going to the door at right*] — We shall see each other a moment again, we shall have another talk?

Sophie — Yes, yes! shut yourself in!

[*Pushes the door to on* ALEXIS, *and goes to open that of the anteroom.*

SCENE IX.

Enter M. *and* MME. VANDERKE, ANTOINE, *and* VICTORINE. SOPHIE, VICTORINE, *and* MME. VANDERKE *form a group and exchange kisses;* VANDERKE *comes to front of stage with* ANTOINE.

Vanderke — You say you didn't find that man?

Antoine — He must have blown away in smoke. Nobody saw either man or horse, and the letter fell from heaven!

Sophie — It's because there has been some confusion in the house on account of the wedding to-morrow.

Mme. Vanderke — But who is this man that is upsetting you so? and is that letter something —

Vanderke — Nothing, nothing, my dear! Nothing upsets me, thank God! [*Low, to* ANTOINE.] My son must have ordered him to return immediately and speak to no one, so as not to cause alarm in the house. It is his own servant he must have charged with this delicate mission.

Antoine — Probably. It is somebody that knows the way around.

Vanderke [*to* SOPHIE] — My dear, we bring you back Victorine, and wish you good-night, as you have been out of sorts with us this evening.

Sophie — Out of sorts ! Never !

Mme. Vanderke — She is absorbed by the idea that her husband is coming. She doesn't think any more about us. [*To* SOPHIE.] There, we'll forgive you! To-morrow would be a red-letter day in this family if Alexis were not absent, and Victorine were not to leave us before long !

Victorine — Oh, I choke when I think of it! Madame, don't make me think of it !

Mme. Vanderke — Why, are you trembling? You were so light-hearted just now that I almost accused you of not regretting us !

Antoine — Does she know what she's thinking about? She is so full of whimsys !

Mme. Vanderke [*observing* VICTORINE] — It is true she is a little capricious — for some time — and to-day above all. Can she still have that fever?

Antoine — No, no, she hasn't had it to-day.

Mme. Vanderke [*to her husband*] — My dear, you are the physician of the house, the only one I have confidence in, and you know ! See if this evening —

Vanderke [*taking* VICTORINE'S *wrist with a smile*] — See here, Madame Invalid !

Victorine — Oh, I am not an invalid. [*Aside.*] Unluckily for me !

Mme. Vanderke [*to her husband, who has grown serious as he feels* VICTORINE'S *pulse*] — Well ?

Vanderke — She has been much agitated to-day : she has fever.

Antoine — At that age you always have it !

Mme. Vanderke — But if she were sick to-morrow the ceremony would have to be put off again. One doesn't suffer without the mind feeling it, and it isn't necessary to have gloomy fancies the one day that may decide the rest of your life.

Antoine [*aside*] — Oh, here's Madame meddling in it, too. [*To* VANDERKE.] Monsieur, send Victorine to bed, then. It's getting late.

Vanderke — Yes, yes : she must get to bed at once and sleep sound.

Antoine [*to his daughter*] — You hear? Monsieur wants you to go to sleep.

Victorine — Can you go to sleep like that, at will?

Antoine — Always fighting me — over the least things! just out of contrariness!

Victorine — I'll go to sleep, papa! I'll go to sleep!

Mme. Vanderke — Come, kiss your father — who is always scolding you — because he adores you. [*Lowering her voice.*] And don't forget what I advised you to tell him.

Victorine — Oh, no, madame! Papa, I have something to tell you, all alone.

Antoine — Me? Alone?

Mme. Vanderke — Yes, Antoine: we will leave you. Good night, Victorine! [*Kisses her.*] Good night, my dear daughter!

[*Kisses her daughter.* VANDERKE *does likewise, and goes out with* MME. VANDERKE *by the anteroom door.* SOPHIE *reënters her chamber at left.*

SCENE X.

Antoine — Well, what is it?

Victorine [*kneeling*] — Father, M. and Mme. Vanderke have given me their blessing this evening. Won't you give me yours?

Antoine — Are you trying to take the backbone out of me? Get up! get up! All this ceremony does harm!

Victorine — Won't you even kiss me?

Antoine — I haven't refused to kiss you.

Victorine [*clinging to him*] — Father! dear father!

Antoine — Oh dear! are you going to cry again? This is unbearable!

Victorine — Oh, I'm not going to cry. It's eight long days that I haven't cried. It's very hard to correct yourself if you don't pay attention. See if my eyes are not dry.

Antoine [*troubled*] — They are very brilliant! You are not seriously sick?

Victorine — Oh, certainly not!

Antoine — You haven't got a headache?

Victorine — A little — it won't amount to anything.

Antoine — No, no, it won't amount to anything. [*Walks away a space, then comes back.*] Is it — is it true you've got fever?

Victorine — I don't think so. See! my hands are very cool.

Antoine — No indeed! they are very hot. Are you in pain?

Victorine — I don't feel any.

Antoine — If you should be taken sick in the night, you must call.

Victorine — Oh, I wouldn't wake up Sophie.

Antoine — You can ring without waking her — here, take this little bell that can be heard in my office. I shall pass a good part of the night there with Monsieur.

Victorine — Don't worry, papa, I shan't be sick.

Antoine — And not to-morrow either?

Victorine — And not to-morrow either.

Antoine — You'll be fresh, pretty, not melancholy? that would make me feel bad; not too frisky, though, that wouldn't be modest. The — a little becoming air — of piety at the church, politeness with everybody — your natural style, I mean.

Victorine — You will be satisfied with me. Oh, a day like that I wouldn't distress you.

Antoine — Good, my dear — thank you.

Victorine — And now won't you give me your blessing? That is all the pay I ask for my submission.

Antoine [*pressing her to his heart*] — I am satisfied with you. [*Melts in spite of himself.*] I do bless you! I love you! yes, with all my soul! [*Kisses her repeatedly with effusion. Aside, lifting his eyes to heaven and holding his daughter in his arms.*] Ah, M. Vanderke, you don't know what I suffer! [*To* VICTORINE, *gently pushing her away.*] Come, come, Monsieur is waiting; and as for you, you must rest — say your prayers, think of your poor mother, who was an honest woman, and then don't think about anything more, mind!

Victorine — Yes, papa.

Antoine [*aside, going, and then stopping to look at* VICTORINE, *who remains motionless*] — I don't know but I'd rather see her cry! Ah, the inside courage isn't there! [*Aloud.*] Victorine!

Victorine [*trembling*] — Papa?

Antoine — Come, listen to me. [*Aside.*] Yes, some will must be put into her. [*Aloud.*] Listen to me hard. Have you courage, true courage?

[*Sits down and takes her in his lap.*

Victorine — Oh, it seems to me I have a great deal.

Antoine — That's what people must have, you see, to do their duty. Have you pride — respect for yourself — what's called a stout heart?

Victorine — I hope so.

Antoine — Well, you've got to marry Fulgence!

Victorine — Am I not doing what you wish?

Antoine — Oh, it isn't that I wish it: it is that conscience and honor command you to.

Victorine — How so?

Antoine — Because — because — There, don't tremble, it comes hard for me to tell you, but I must. Fulgence imagines you love some one that you ought not to love.

Victorine [*sharply*] — It isn't so!

Antoine — I know it very well, heavens! but he imagines it, and others might imagine it too. Then here's what they'd say about you: "See that little Victorine, Antoine's daughter, who after all is only an upper servant at M. Vanderke's: she is imprudent to look higher than herself and think she might marry — "

Victorine — Why, who?

Antoine — Who? The son of the family, nothing more! a rich and noble young man, who sees nothing more in her than a childhood companion. Well, because they are good to her, because they treat her with kindness, she has the folly to think herself cut out for a grand marriage, and scorns her equals.

Victorine — Oh, papa! what are you saying? Does M. Fulgence think that? Would they say that about me?

Antoine — If you are not married resolutely and with a good grace, they will say that, and they will believe it. And if M. and Mme. Vanderke themselves came to think that, if they accused you of ambition, of coquetry — of baseness — for ambition is baseness sometimes —

Victorine — Enough, enough, father!

Antoine — And if M. Alexis — he wouldn't believe it — but suppose he should believe it, how vain and ridiculous he would think you! how he would laugh at you inside!

Victorine [*hiding her face in her father's bosom*] — Oh God, enough!

Antoine — You see very well how —

Victorine [*rising*] — I see one must have the courage of her own dignity — I will have it, father!

Antoine [*rising and kissing her*] — I have given you pain in telling you this, but it had to be —

Victorine — You have done right, father!

Scene XI.

Sophie [*coming out of her chamber*] — Well, Antoine, this is how you make her go to bed early!

Antoine [*behind* Victorine, *who has remained downcast, and sits at the right with an absorbed air*] — Madame, Victorine is calm and perfectly reasonable now. Don't pity her too much — don't spoil her, please — don't destroy my work.

Sophie — Antoine, if it were your work to kill her, I believe you would go on with it to the end!

Antoine [*going out by the anteroom*] — My God! my God!

Scene XII.

Sophie [*coming forward toward* Victorine, *who has remained as if petrified, on the fauteuil at right*] — Why, what ails her? What is she thinking about?

[Alexis *leaves the room at right, and comes with* Sophie *behind* Victorine's *fauteuil.*

Sophie [*low*] — What are you doing, brother? Oh, don't show yourself, don't speak to her, since you can't save her!

Alexis — You speak to her, sister: she frightens me!

Sophie [*to* Victorine] — Victorine! Victorine! Are you deaf? are you dead? Answer me!

Victorine [*awaking from a sort of dream*] — Ah! what is the matter?

Sophie — Do you forget that I'm waiting for you? Don't you want to get to sleep?

Victorine — Oh, that is true; I hadn't thought of that.

Sophie — What are you doing there, what were you thinking of?

Victorine — Nothing! I was sitting here and looking at the floor.

Sophie — Then a floor is a very beautiful thing?

Victorine — I wasn't seeing it.

Sophie — Was it Fulgence you were thinking of?

Victorine — Fulgence? Yes — no — I don't know.

Sophie — It's because you love him so much!

Victorine — I love him so much! Good heavens! I don't hate Fulgence. I dread him a little, that's all.

Sophie — You are afraid of him! Confess you are afraid of him!

Victorine — Afraid — why? [*Clings to* SOPHIE, *trembling.*

Alexis [*showing himself*] — You are afraid, Victorine! Oh, then you don't love him — there now!

Victorine [*rising*] — Oh, M. Alexis, is this you come back? [*Coldly, with an effort.*] You will assist at my marriage? [*More coldly.*] I am very grateful to you.

Alexis — Your marriage! — your marriage won't come off. I shall oppose it myself! Will you contradict me?

Victorine — You will oppose it? And why?

Alexis — Because a woman ought to love her husband, and you don't love the one they are giving you.

Victorine — What do you know about it, M. Alexis? Where do you gather that I don't love Fulgence? Who told you so?

Sophie — Why pretend so, Victorine? Why tell lies when your lot can be decided by a moment's sincerity?

Victorine — Lies! why do you tell me I lie? What do you take me for? What do you two think of me?

Alexis — Victorine, you seem to be wandering. What ails you, my dear girl? Come, open your heart. Are we not your best friends, am I no longer your brother, isn't my sister yours? Do you think we don't love you with our whole souls; that we are not determined to save you, if you will only say the word to us?

Victorine — Let me alone. I've got a headache, I've got a fever, and you're tormenting me; you're doing me harm for the pleasure of doing it. Oh, nothing will do for you but to laugh at me; I love Fulgence, yes, I love him, and in spite of you — in spite of everybody, I'm going to love him!

[*Escapes from* SOPHIE'S *arms, and goes toward the door on the left.*

Sophie — But listen, Victorine, listen once more.

Victorine — No, no: I've said all there was to say.

[*Goes out swiftly.*

Alexis — Don't leave her, sister, she makes me uneasy!

Sophie — As for me, I no longer know her; I no longer understand her. Forget what I said to you, brother, and go away!

Alexis — Abandon her so? Indeed not!

Sophie — Oh, heavens! some one is coming, they're knocking! [*Retires hurriedly into her room on the left.*

Scene XIII.

Alexis [*going to open the door at rear*] — No! I won't forget anything, and I won't hide. [*Opens the door.*] M. Fulgence!

Fulgence — M. Vanderke! I was quite sure of it!

[*Goes to the bell and rings it violently. The sound of the bell can be heard at a great distance.*

Alexis — What are you doing?

Fulgence — You see, monsieur, I know this bell sounds in M. Antoine's office, and I'm calling so he may come here, so he may know why I don't want to be his son-in-law.

Alexis — A scandal, monsieur? would you make a scene? You are jealous, I know; but you must know yourself —

Fulgence — I know what I wanted to know — and I beg you to believe that from this moment I am no longer jealous.

Alexis — And you would lose Victorine, and outrage my family by your suspicions? I will not suffer it. By what right are you here yourself?

Fulgence — The right of an engaged husband who is very ridiculous, perhaps, but who doesn't want to be a contemptible husband. I felt you were here, and I spied on you, monsieur — I wanted to assure myself. I have done my duty by myself: if you think it bad, it is because you have very little sense of yours.

Alexis — Monsieur, I will teach you — you shall render me — no, I should have too many advantages over you, and appearances are against me; I accept all the consequences of an involuntary fault. Take thought for doing your duty, also, monsieur, and of not being more guilty in my eyes than I wish to be in yours. Come with me and find my father.

Fulgence — No, monsieur: I know my duty as well as you, but I also know my rights. I call on you to stay here till people can come and certify to your presence. [*Passionately.*] Do you mean to make me pass for a slanderer? [*Rings again.*

Alexis — Certainly not, monsieur: my part is chosen. Here! you don't ring loud enough: your hand trembles. I'll help you. [*Pulls the bell cord and rings sharply.*

Scene XIV.

Enter M. *and* Mme. Vanderke *and* Antoine.

Antoine [*entering first, running*] — Here I am, Victorine! Are you — [*Stops, petrified.*] Fulgence! M. Alexis!

Vanderke — My son!

Mme. Vanderke [*hastening to her son*] — Alexis!

Antoine — What's going on?

Fulgence — M. Antoine, what I have to say to you is for a father alone to hear.

Antoine — A father? Then it concerns Victorine! Well, you have nothing to say to me about Victorine that everybody mayn't hear. Speak, speak, no keeping back anything: I don't want it. I have no secrets whatever from M. and Mme. Vanderke.

Vanderke — Alexis, why are you here when you ought to be in Paris?

Fulgence — Monsieur's silence is more eloquent than anything I could say. Come, come, this affair must be settled in the family! You are very good, M. Vanderke, to have given Mlle. Victorine a dower: but as for the man who will take those gifts, look for him somewhere else; for it won't be I!

Vanderke — Fulgence, passion is blinding you — you are growing outrageous toward me! Listen: my son brought me news. I rely on your honor — do you wish me to tell you?

Fulgence — No, monsieur, no! don't rely on me, don't rely on anything, don't rely on anybody: there is nothing but lying and treachery in the world!

Mme. Vanderke — M. Fulgence, do you accuse my son? But he was here with his sister; and did he know — does he know even that Victorine is with her? Tell me, Alexis, did you know it?

Alexis — Mother, I might tell you that it is this gentleman who informed me, but I can't lie. I have seen Victorine and spoken with her.

Vanderke — Of course Sophie was present?

Antoine — Answer now, M. Alexis!

Alexis — Antoine, I don't wish to answer. I should blush at having to justify myself.

Antoine — You don't wish to answer? — you don't *wish*, M. Alexis Vanderke? I esteem you, I love you — I have raised

you on my knees, I have carried you in my arms — I would have given my life for you — and when they accuse my daughter of being seduced by you — oh, I know very well it isn't true; but you ought to answer, you ought to justify her before her betrothed — these scornful airs are not becoming — they are death to us. You don't say anything? Well, I'll go and look for Victorine —

Mme. Vanderke — No, no, no scenes before her: she is sick.

Antoine — Sick or not, dead or alive, she shall tell the truth!

[*Goes toward* SOPHIE'S *room;* SOPHIE *comes out of it and stops him.*

SCENE XV.

Mme. Vanderke [*to* FULGENCE] — There, you see — I was quite sure of it!

Fulgence — Oh, I don't suspect Madame of not acting in good faith! I don't incriminate that interview. Madame chaperoned a scene of very touching farewells, doubtless, but I don't believe in eternal farewells myself. Besides, even if my wife were unfaithful only in heart, that is more than I could bear. [*Here* ALEXIS *listens to* FULGENCE *with attention and interest, without thinking of braving him further.*] So no one here can take it ill that I renounce the making of a woman's happiness and my own. M. Antoine, have no regrets, I feel that I should have killed her! Good-bye! [*Starts to leave.*

Vanderke — Yes, Fulgence, we must part. [*Approaching him.*] But you will accept the position I design you at Marseilles: I need an honorable man like you to watch over my interests.

Fulgence — No, monsieur, I wish nothing — neither services nor protection, and above all no pity! I would rather stand on my own feet in bachelorhood as in marriage: that is my sole ambition. Good-bye, monsieur. [*Goes out by the anteroom.*

SCENE XVI.

Vanderke [*looking after* FULGENCE *as he goes out*] — Proud, upright, and distrustful! He is right, he has no need of any one! [*Coming forward to his son.*] But you, monsieur, have acted badly. You ought not to see Victorine, nor even your sister. That is the first grief you cause me by your wrongdoing, but it is profound.

Antoine — After what has just passed, I cannot remain here longer — I should be dishonored. My daughter will die in a convent; myself where I can! — far from you, M. Vanderke, but blessing you — and trying to forgive this young man — who has the happiness of being your son — without that!

M. *and* MME. VANDERKE *make a gesture as of taking each an arm of* ANTOINE, *to detain him.* MME. VANDERKE *has her eyes fixed on her son with a look of tenderness and confidence.*

Alexis [*grasping* ANTOINE'S *arm vigorously*] — Antoine, I don't wish you to pardon me — I wish much more: I wish you to accept me as your son, and grant me your daughter.

Antoine [*joyfully*] — You? you? [*Wonderingly.*] Is it possible? [*Incredulously.*] Are you crazy? [*Proudly.*] I don't want it. Is that a marriage for you? [*Authoritatively.*] I won't consent to it!

SCENE XVII.

Victorine [*pale, and supporting herself with difficulty*] — No more will I, father. I don't love and I never have loved M. Alexis Vanderke.

Alexis — You are lying, Victorine!

Antoine [*catching* VICTORINE *in his arms as she sinks*] — She is not lying!

Alexis — You are lying yourself! Ah, my dear Antoine! I was there. [*Points to the door at right.*] I heard you tell her that I should scorn her, that I should laugh at her, if I guessed her love. — Your father was lying, Victorine; and as for me, I swear to you, I swear to Antoine, I swear to my father and my mother [*kneeling before* M. *and* MME. VANDERKE] that I love Victorine tenderly, seriously, and for my whole life!

Vanderke [*to his son*] — Good, my boy: you have always understood that to obey honor, you had no need of my permission.

Alexis — O father, O my best friend!

Sophie — Oh, thank you, father! thank you, Alexis!

Antoine [*to* VANDERKE] — But, monsieur, this marriage — Your son — It is impossible —

Vanderke — Antoine, it is my will, it is my son's duty, and it is my duty and yours.

Antoine — How is that?

Mme. Vanderke — Because they love each other.

Vanderke — And because we ought to have foreseen it if we meant to put a stop to it.

A WEDDING CALL.

By ALEXANDRE DUMAS, Jr.

(Translated for this work by Forrest Morgan.)

[Alexandre Dumas, Jr., was the illegitimate son of the great novelist, born in Paris, July 27, 1824, and not acknowledged by his father till six years old: his boyhood experiences filled him with passionate resentment against the social ostracism of illegitimates, and he devoted much mature energy to their cause. He went through the lower grades of schools, but had no superior education. At seventeen he published a small volume of poems, "The Sins of Youth." At about nineteen he returned to his father, but only stayed a few months, as the disorderly spendthrift household he afterwards drew from in "A Prodigal Father" disturbed him; so did his private debts, but his father told him lightly, "Work and pay them off, as I do." He took the advice, but not at first very energetically, beginning with a one-act play in verse, "The Queen's Jewel" (1845), of no account, and unimportant pieces in the *Ladies' Journal*, but mainly trying to have a good time. But at twenty-two he set seriously to work, writing novels; the only one of this period which has survived is "La Dame aux Camélias" (1848), kept alive by the famous play ("Camille") made from it a year or two later. Yet this marvelous play, vividly alive, and holding the stage half a century after, was hawked about the theaters for two or three years without acceptance, it being so opposed to the ruling ideals as to seem a foregone failure. Produced in 1852, it took the French world by storm; prohibited in England till after hundreds of performances in France, it was at once equally successful there. A year later he gave forth "Diana of the Lily," which did not take. Two years after (1855) he brought out "The Demi-Monde," one of his foremost productions; in 1857 "The Money Question," in 1858 "The Natural Son," in 1859 "A Prodigal Father" (adapted in English as "My Awful Dad"), and then nothing for four years. In 1864 he came forward again with "The Friend of Women," which was a complete failure. In disappointment he turned to novel-writing once more, and published in 1866 "The Clemenceau Case," which had only moderate success, but is still read and highly esteemed. About this time he was accidentally launched on a new stage career of different class. Asked by the famous journalist Émile Girardin to put a play he had written in shape for the stage, he had to remodel it so entirely that Girardin refused to set his name to it; neither would Dumas, but when produced as "A Woman's Torture," it had enormous success. It was a three-act play of moderate length, and Dumas saw that brevity and rapidity were now essential characteristics of a play, and wrote no more long ones. "Mme. Aubray's Ideas" was brought out in 1867, "Denise" the same year, the tremendous "Wedding Call" — in some respects his masterpiece of brilliant wit and effectiveness — and "The Princess Georges" in 1868, and for some years no more. "Claude's Wife" (Claude = Claudius: *i.e.*, "A Modern Messalina") came in 1873: it was Dumas' own favorite of all his plays; he insisted on having it revived long after, but it failed both times. The same year came "M. Alphonse," a striking success. "The Danicheffs" and "The Foreign Woman" came in 1876, "Joseph Balsamo" in 1878, "The Princess of Bagdad" and "Francillon" (his last, and very successful) in 1887. He had finished a great play, "The Road to Thebes," but for some reason held it back from production, and finally refused to let it be acted after his death. He died November 28, 1895.]

PLAY IN ONE ACT.

Scene. — A drawing-room in a country house.

Scene I.

Present: Lydia, Countess de Morancé, *a youngerly widow; and her friend* Lebonnard.

Lebonnard — It has just struck two.

Lydia [*showing agitation*] — Our friends are late.

Lebonnard — No, it's your clock that's too fast.

Lydia [*sighing*] — Ah-h !

Lebonnard — Do you feel upset ?

Lydia — It's very natural, I should say.

Lebonnard — Try and not let it be seen.

Lydia [*drawing a breath to the utmost depth*] — O-h !

Lebonnard — Did you make out ?

Lydia — Yes.

Lebonnard — You are all ready ?

Lydia — Yes.

Lebonnard — It's all understood ? You haven't forgotten anything ? You don't regret anything ?

Lydia — Nothing, so long as I don't have to think of that man any more !

Lebonnard — Don't worry, you won't think of him any more.

Valet [*announces*] — M. and Mme. de Cygneroi !

Lydia [*aside*] — They've come very early.

Scene II.

Enter De Cygneroi, *his wife* Fernande, *and a nurse-maid carrying a three-months-old baby.*

Lydia [*to* Fernande, *in the most affectionate tone, but inspecting her from head to foot*] — At length !

De Cygneroi [*extending his hand to* Lydia] — My dear Countess, allow me to present Mme. de Cygneroi. I should have been happy to make this presentation the very day of our marriage, for you are to be, I trust, one of our best friends ; but you were absent.

Lydia — I was forced to rejoin my husband, who was very sick, and died a few days after.

De Cygneroi [*in surprise*] — You are a widow?

Lydia — For more than a year.

De Cygneroi — Why didn't you let me know?

Lydia — I didn't know where you were. [*Taking* FERNANDE'S *hand.*] We shall soon regain the lost time, madame. M. de Cygneroi and I are old friends, and I believe I was the first confidante of his love for you.

De Cygneroi — I owed you that, Countess.

Fernande — My husband has often spoken of you, madame; we are only home ten days, and my first call —

Lydia — You have been traveling the whole year?

Fernande — For the first six months; then we settled down in Brittany at my father's. I wanted to be near him for my confinement. Shall I introduce my son, three months old? I had to bring him with me, as I could not have paid you the call otherwise, for I nu —

De Cygneroi [*interrupting*] — Fernande!

Fernande — Why, yes, I nurse him, and I am proud of it. The Countess has had children, I presume?

Lydia — No, madame.

Fernande — I am sorry for you. It is such an amusement!

Lydia [*low, to* LEBONNARD] — She is a fool!

Lebonnard [*same*] — Oh no, oh no.

Lydia [*looking at the baby which the nurse holds out to her, while Fernande very gently lifts the veil that covers the little face*] — He is splendid. He is very large for his age.

Fernande — I should think so! He weighed ten pounds when he was born. Didn't he, Gaston? It was you that weighed him. — If you knew how I suffered! I thought I was going to die. We don't know about that when we get married. Poor little darling! But what a delight it was, too, the first cry he set up! And he didn't lose any time about it: he cried right away! But it's the very only time he did cry: he always laughs. — Give a sweet little laugh for the lady. There, see that! — I got confessed the night before: you can't tell what may happen. My cousin was confined a little ahead of me, the 23d of June, and I the 2d of July; so her boy is older than Gaston (my boy has the same name as his father): well, there isn't any comparison, either as to size or intelligence. He understands everything already. It isn't because he is my boy, but he is really extraordinary.

Lydia — Like all children!

Fernande — Yes, and I'm puffed up like all mothers.

Maid — [*who is carrying the baby to* FERNANDE] — Madame — ?

Fernande [*looking at her watch*] — It's his hour ?

Maid — Yes, madame.

Fernande — His Lordship is hungry. But when he doesn't get fed right off he gets mad. You will permit me, dear madame ?

[*Takes the baby in her arms and makes ready to go out.*

Lydia — I will go with you — to the dining-room. [*Low, to* LEBONNARD.] She certainly is a fool.

Lebonnard — Oh no, oh no.

SCENE III.

Lebonnard — Well, is it going along on casters ?

De Cygneroi — Yes.

Lebonnard — Are you put out ?

De Cygneroi — Lord, no ! but I'm a little uneasy. I couldn't do otherwise than present my wife to Mme. de Morancé, whom I used to — visit — before I was married ; social usage forces me to : but I'd have been just as well satisfied not to bring my wife here.

Lebonnard — Why ?

De Cygneroi — You want to know ?

Lebonnard — Yes, go ahead.

De Cygneroi — Mme. de Morancé and my wife ought not to strike up a close intimacy.

Lebonnard — Why not ? Mme. de Morancé is a woman in society, and the best society. Nobody has a word to say against her, she has never been compromised, she has never had a lover !

De Cygneroi — Huh ! what about me ?

Lebonnard — You ! were you Mme. de Morancé's lover ? You say so ; but if it were true, you ought to be the last one to say so ! Fortunately it isn't true.

De Cygneroi — What, not true ?

Lebonnard — Prove it to me.

De Cygneroi — You're going crazy ! you were our sole confidant. [LEBONNARD *begins to laugh.*] What do you find to laugh about ?

Lebonnard — You amuse me greatly.

De Cygneroi — Why that sort of fleering tone ?

Lebonnard — What is being a woman's lover?

De Cygneroi — What is it?

Lebonnard — Yes.

De Cygneroi — If you don't know at your age, you never will know.

Lebonnard — All the more reason for explaining it to me.

De Cygneroi — It either is or isn't, and *it* doesn't need explaining.

Lebonnard — Then it's a fact.

De Cygneroi — Naturally.

Lebonnard — What is the characteristic of a fact?

De Cygneroi — Do you know you are insupportable with your hair-splitting?

Lebonnard — The characteristic of a fact is the ability to prove it, either by witnesses who have seen it, or by traces of it you come upon, or even by notoriety or tradition. Augustus ascended into heaven after his death, — Numerius Atticus saw and publicly announced it; Charles IX. fired on the people; '93 inaugurated liberty in France, — those are incontestable facts. Where is the witness, the notoriety, the tradition, to prove that you were Mme. de Morancé's lover? Are you ready to make solemn public oath to it like Numerius Atticus, to put the occurrence on the stage like Marie Joseph Chénier, to print it in the *People's Friend* like Marat? Is it in history, in legend, on men's lips? You want it to have been for the first time with you, who say it was so at all: is it to be so still? Do you call Mme. de Morancé *thou* before folks? Do you kiss her before her servants? Do you call her "My darling big kitten"? Have you a solitary letter from her? And hasn't she the right to order you out of the house if you make any allusion to a fact that can't exist except in your own imagination? In a word, if to save your life or your honor you had to prove the fact, could you prove it? No! Then it isn't so. There's nothing true but what you can prove, and you can't prove anything but what's true. You are dreaming, my dear fellow.

De Cygneroi — And the moral of this discourse?

Lebonnard — Is, that Mme. de Morancé, for you as for me, is a woman in society, the same society as your mother, your sister, and your wife; a woman you sometimes dined with when you were a youth, and whom it's your duty to present your wife to when you get married, because she is worthy of your respect.

De Cygneroi — Of my respect, yes : of my esteem, no. Esteem and respect are not the same thing. You respect situations : you don't esteem anything but characters. You are a bachelor, which must be a good life ; but get married to-morrow to a girl perfectly pure, perfectly innocent, perfectly modest, and you'll see at once how you rate all those women of the world, of all the world, and for all the world, that you've had love affairs with to occupy and employ your youth. You'll see what pity, not to say what scorn, you bury them with for all time, and how you dig a common ditch and shovel into it, in a hurry and higgledy-piggledy, the marquises and the housewives, the great ladies and the street-walkers ! and how they may sort themselves out in there as they can — they are the same price ! You were wrong to pursue them, they were wrong to yield, but you wouldn't have pursued them if it hadn't been evident they'd yield. That love ? Rot ! Pleasure at the outside, and yet such pleasure !

Lebonnard — In other words, you're like all men, — you have two moralities according to circumstances ; you reasoned formerly like a bachelor, you reason now like a husband. That is called selfishness beforehand, ingratitude afterwards. Lovelace is dead, 'rah for Hubby !

De Cygneroi — That'll do to talk !

Lebonnard — Then if Mme. de Morancé had become a widow during your earlier condition, you wouldn't have married her ?

De Cygneroi — She didn't become one, which disposes of that.

Lebonnard — You wouldn't have married her ?

De Cygneroi — No.

Lebonnard — And what reasons could you have given for that dastardly performance ?

De Cygneroi — Lebonnard !

Lebonnard — There's nothing offensive in the phrase, seeing it's only a hypothesis. Then your love would have come to an end at the exact moment you could have avowed and proved it, and you would have abandoned that unfortunate woman to her regrets and her remorse, with neither regrets nor remorse of your own.

De Cygneroi — But I did abandon her all the same to her regrets and her remorse, and you see what sort of mourning she wears for her love, her virtue, and her husband to boot. And there's no love and there's no remorse in any of these affairs,

and none of that stuff is true. Certainly nobody has cultivated more than I have that contraband love which moralists have branded with the gross name of adultery; and as I'm not a fool, whatever you may say about it, I have gone to the trouble of submitting that particular love to a physiologico-philosophico-chemical analysis, and here's the result: Adultery is one of those mixtures where the elements sometimes associate, but never combine. The element contributed by the woman is composed of a topsy-turvy ideal, a weak dignity, an elastic morality, an imagination muddied by bad talk, bad reading, and bad examples, curiosity of sensation disguised under the name of sentiment, appetite for danger, delight in stratagem, need of the sin, vertigo from below, and all the duplicities the circumstances necessitate. The man brings his tailor, his horse, the way he ties his cravat, oglings like a provincial tenor, mechanical hand-squeezing, phrases that have been kicked about everywhere till the very lozenges and valentines will have no more of them, protestations you couldn't take in a Tammany voter with, his idleness, desire to economize, — Clorinda and Pamela not lending except on pawn; lastly, what he calls his honor, — that is to say, in case of an explosion, the chance of getting a slap in the face, and either putting up with it or killing a man he has robbed, or sadder still, living on with the dishonored wife in a cottage where there is no heart any longer. Once the retort is over the fire, forward come the carriage with the blinds down, the chamber in the shady hotel, the prudential bolts, and all the traditional hypocrisies; the friends you have to fight shy of in the streets, the servants you have to bribe, the bondages of every description, the humiliations of every species, the dirty tricks of every sort. Combine, triturate, distill, decompose, precipitate all the elements, and if you find there an atom of esteem, a speck of love, a vapor of dignity, I'll eat my head. — False! false! false! Where shall we get love for our wives, our mothers, and our daughters from, if we place it there? Pure prostitution, I tell you! And see here — when just now I saw my wife, my wife! prattling so innocently about her baby and her love to Mme. de Morancé, I wanted to push her to the door with the exclamation, "Make your escape! I was that wretched creature's lover!"

Lebonnard — Shake! you're in the truth with both feet.

De Cygneroi — You're joking again.

Lebonnard — God forbid! I think exactly as you do.

De Cygneroi — Then your sermons just now — ?

Lebonnard — Merely for proof. I wanted to know if you were still in love with Mme. de Morancé. I was afraid of it when I saw you come back here.

De Cygneroi — Huh ! how little you know me ! Why, in the three years that — mixture lasted, I wasn't in love six weeks. I was in hot water from the start. And the tears ! and the reproaches ! and the jealousies ! and the spyings ! and the terrors ! — Do you know how often Mme. de Morancé and I found ourselves alone — what is called alone ? I never said anything to you about that, because you'd have guyed me. It's incredible, and you'll laugh to kill. In three years, twice, once at Lyons and once at Havre, — for it took a journey to get so, by meeting in a hotel where we didn't appear to know each other before the other travelers, and seizing the first chance. You can see that from the way it is here. And when I wrote to her I signed " Adèle," as if I had been an old convent friend, and she signed " Alfred " ! There are the letters we exchanged. At last, one day, I took my courage in both hands and simply said to her : " I respect you too much not to be frank with you : I don't love you as you deserve to be loved, and I'm going to get married ! "

Lebonnard — How simple it was !

De Cygneroi — After hunting for two years, that was the best I found to do.

Lebonnard — What did she say ?

De Cygneroi — Fell in a dead faint.

Lebonnard — Thunder !

De Cygneroi — For a spell I thought she had killed herself. I spent five minutes there that weren't funny. I wanted to call for help, and I was in a cold sweat for fear somebody would come in.

Lebonnard — Well ?

De Cygneroi — She came to all by herself.

Lebonnard — And then ?

De Cygneroi — And then she said to me, " Very well, sir, get married ! "

Lebonnard — That didn't lack for simplicity either. And since then ?

De Cygneroi — I wanted to have an explanation with her.

Lebonnard — There now ! I was saying to myself, " That man will make reparation ! "

De Cygneroi — My dear fellow, I may not have but one merit, but I do have that, — I am everything that's most sincere ; I have neither pride nor prejudice ; what I feel I avow ; what I experience I tell. — When I presented myself at Mme. de Morancé's, she had left the house.

Lebonnard — You wrote to her ?

De Cygneroi — Certainly ! A fool's letter. But you know a fellow writes he doesn't know why.

Lebonnard — And she answered you ?

De Cygneroi — She answered me : " You were nearer right than I was, thank you ! ALFRED." When I got married, I sent her a letter of announcement, as I did to everybody I knew. To-day we've made her a call ; she has given us a cordial reception : everything's O.K.

Lebonnard — Ah, these women, these women !

De Cygneroi — Which means — ?

Lebonnard — Then that's your whole story ?

De Cygneroi — Yes.

Lebonnard — You don't know anything else ?

De Cygneroi — No ! what else ?

Lebonnard [*beckoning to* DE CYGNEROI *to come close so he can talk low*] — When Mme. de Morancé was — [*looks to see if any one can hear, and lowers his voice*] — the mistress of Don Alfonso —

De Cygneroi — And who might Don Alfonso be ?

Lebonnard — Mme. de Morancé's first lover, a Spaniard with black hair, ruddy cheek-bones, blue cheeks, white teeth, red lips, and finds means, like all Spaniards, of putting an *r* into every word he says — *rrr !*

De Cygneroi — Who got up that yarn for you ?

Lebonnard — It's no yarn, it's a fact.

De Cygneroi — Are there witnesses ? Did you see it ? Numerius Atticus —

Lebonnard — I'm Numerius Atticus.

De Cygneroi [*with conviction*] — It's absurd.

Lebonnard — When I tell you it's — Would I have let you leave that woman so brutally, if I hadn't known what to count on with her ? You are a woman-killer, you are an amorist, you can't be told everything ; I'm of no consequence, I'm a confidant that nobody feels any constraint with. I'm not so happy, but I know more details. And besides, it isn't those inside the house that see how it's burning, it's the ones out-

side. I am outside, and I see just where the fire starts and how it's put out. It was you that put out Alfonso's fire, or the fired-out Alfonso if you like it better. You thought you were a fire-bug, and you were a hydrant !

De Cygneroi — Oh, you tell me that, because it's high comedy ; it's the legit. !

Lebonnard — Well, she broke with Don Alfonso in 1865.

De Cygneroi — '65 ?

Lebonnard — October '65.

De Cygneroi — But I was June '64.

Lebonnard — Which proves that she began with cherries and finished up with prunes.

De Cygneroi — It isn't possible. She lived in retirement, and besides, when all's said, she's no such woman.

Lebonnard — Very good. Do you know this handwriting ? [*Shows him a letter.*

De Cygneroi [*trying to get hold of it*] — Do I know it !

Lebonnard — Wait ! regular formalities. Do you solemnly swear you'll never tell Mme. de Morancé I showed you this letter ?

De Cygneroi — I solemnly swear !

Lebonnard [*aside*] — Who is it that needs a false oath ?

De Cygneroi [*reading*] — " My friend — "

Lebonnard — " My friend," that's me.

De Cygneroi — " My friend, in the absence of Gaston — "

Lebonnard — " Gaston," that's you. Look at the date.

De Cygneroi — August '64.

Lebonnard — And you were June.

De Cygneroi — And I was June.

Lebonnard — Then that was two months after you were — ?

De Cygneroi — Just so.

Lebonnard — Do you recall being absent ?

De Cygneroi — Yes, I went to see my mother, who was sick.

Lebonnard — Well, it was precisely during that absence she wrote this note. Read ahead.

De Cygneroi [*reading*] — " My friend, in Gaston's absence I must absolutely see A——."

Lebonnard — " A——"? Alfonso.

De Cygneroi — I understand perfectly.

Lebonnard — You understand perfectly.

De Cygneroi — " Give me your hospitality to-day. Send off all the servants, and if there should be any danger in my enter-

ing your house, make the same old signal at your window." So she went to your house?

Lebonnard — Often.

De Cygneroi — And me she made go to Lyons or Havre.

Lebonnard — There are women who love best in certain cities. I knew a "great and honest lady," as Brantôme says, myself, who only loved me at Dombasle, on the Meuse. I don't know what memories that district brought up to her, but she absolutely wouldn't love me anywhere else. I am bound in honesty to admit that once there, she loved me well. Proceed.

De Cygneroi — That's all: proceed yourself.

Lebonnard — Well, she came to my house that day because she wanted to get possession again of some letters that Don Alfonso wouldn't give up, — for she is a woman who always wants her letters given back. In fact, it was that very lesson that decided her to sign "Alfred" when she wrote to you — you or others.

De Cygneroi — What, others?

Lebonnard — Perhaps. But I only know this one history. I think there must have been a new one for some time, though. An infernal big Englishman comes here —

De Cygneroi — And why, at the time these things were going on, didn't you let me know about them?

Lebonnard — It wasn't my secret; and besides, you weren't in any danger. It was neither a girl nor a widow, that you might have to marry, it was only another man's wife. In her heart I believe she loved you better than she did Don Alfonso: but she was forced to go the road he wanted her to in order to get her letters back, all the more that he knew of her fresh tie-up; and it wasn't till the 11th of October, '65, that she obtained her last little scrap of paper.

De Cygneroi — '65?

Lebonnard — '65.

De Cygneroi — Then out of my three years — ?

Lebonnard — Don Alfonso still owes you fifteen months, about.

De Cygneroi — And it was at your house that —

Lebonnard — That the accounts were settled. The fact is, it was more suitable for everybody. And then, Mme. de Morancé had asked me with so much insistence, as this letter proves. [*Handing* GASTON *a letter.*

De Cygneroi [*reads*] — "Yes, I remember everything and regret nothing — "

Lebonnard [*quickly*] — That isn't it! that isn't it!

De Cygneroi — But it's her writing, too!

Lebonnard — Yes, but it's about another matter. Give it here! Give it here!

De Cygneroi [*looking at the envelope*] — Why, the letter is addressed to you!

Lebonnard — Yes.

De Cygneroi — Oh, come, say now! you too? *Tu quoque?*

Lebonnard — No, not exactly.

De Cygneroi — Now I understand why you didn't say anything to me.

Lebonnard — Listen, listen. I, you know, was — One can't even tell — Fact is, it would need a special word for these shades of difference.

De Cygneroi — Then there's four of us already!

Lebonnard — Four?

De Cygneroi — You, I, the Spaniard, *rrr!*

Lebonnard — No, no! this way: the Spaniard, you, I —

De Cygneroi — What odds! — and Lord — the Englishman — he is a lord, I hope?

Lebonnard — Yes: Lord Gamberfield.

De Cygneroi — What, that damnably ugly red-headed Englishman that she said she couldn't look at without laughing?

Lebonnard — Woman is very changeable.

De Cygneroi — That's four of us! Let's make up a whist party. Between ourselves, you know what they call that sort of women?

Lebonnard — Perfectly; but it isn't worth the trouble of saying, especially as here's your wife.

Scene IV.

Enter Fernande, *carrying the baby.*

De Cygneroi [*running to* Fernande *and taking her face in his hands*] — Oh, my adorable angel, how I love you!

Fernande [*kissing him*] — And so do I! [*Perceiving* Lebonnard.] Oh, we're not alone!

De Cygneroi — Before Lebonnard we can say anything: he's another self.

Lebonnard — Ever since '65.

De Cygneroi — He may tell you what I was saying to him just now, and what I think of you when I compare you with other women.

Fernande — I am no better than the rest, dear; only it's me you love.

De Cygneroi [*taking the baby in his arms and covering it with kisses*] — Ah, dear little mite!

Fernande — Take care! don't shake him up too much, he's just had breakfast.

De Cygneroi — We must go now.

Fernande — We can't: Mme. de Morancé has asked us to stay to dinner.

De Cygneroi — Did you accept?

Fernande — I said I'd come and ask you if we might.

De Cygneroi — You will say to Mme. de Morancé that we have business in Paris.

Fernande — But we can't start back before the baby's had a nap. In the carriage he won't sleep a wink more. You know he has to have music to go to sleep. That's it! I'll play the "Cradle Song" to him. [*Seats herself at the piano.*

Lebonnard — That makes a charming picture.

De Cygneroi [*dandling the baby in his arms: to* LEBONNARD] — Allow me to say, my dear boy, that even if you didn't think it your duty to warn me in the old times, you might have warned me two days ago, when I wrote to you we were coming to make this call and asked you to be here.

Lebonnard — What I've just said to you, nobody else knows. You can find some pretext for not coming back, and that'll end it.

De Cygneroi — Make yourself easy on that score.

[*Changes arm under the baby and shakes it up, instead of putting it in the cradle.* FERNANDE *still playing Chopin's "Cradle Song" on the piano.*

Lebonnard — You'll have that child waked up. Mind what you're about.

De Cygneroi [*handing the baby to* LEBONNARD] — All right, hold him, if you can do it better than I can.

Lebonnard [*taking the baby and looking at it asleep*] — Poo-r papa, he's mad with his old friend Lebonnard, because his friend Lebonnard has told him the truth; and men, they don't like

that, just as babies don't like to be spanked. And to think that you too, you'll be a man, and you'll love women, and you'll want they shouldn't ever have loved anybody but you, just as if you were all alone on earth. And when you are quite convinced they adore you, you'll drop them right there to run after other ones. And when you find out they don't love you, all the time you're not loving them any more, you'll be furious and you'll get jealous re-tro-*spec*-tive-ly, like your little papa just this minute. So you'll be an ass like all of us, darling pet, and you'll bestow life on other men who'll be asses like you, and they'll beget others who'll be asses like them, and so on, till God hasn't any more need of human assitude, which will be a l-o-n-g time. Sleep, my dearie, you'll never do anything better. What consoles me a little is to think that the assiness of my family will come to a halt in my person, as I shall die without direct heirs. [*Kisses the baby.*

Fernande — Is he asleep?

Lebonnard — Sound.

Fernande [*seeing* LEBONNARD *putting the baby in the cradle and* DE CYGNEROI *writing*] — Poor Lebonnard, you made him carry your son.

De Cygneroi — He wanted to. He worships it. And besides, I had a little writing to do.

Lebonnard — True enough, I worship babies, like everybody that hasn't any.

Fernande — Give him to me. Anyway, it's so hot here I'd rather he'd sleep out under the trees.

Lebonnard — I'll carry him there for you.

Fernande — But where is the maid?

Lebonnard — She must be with the cook.

[DE CYGNEROI *waves a pleasant good-bye. They go out. He reseats himself to write.*

SCENE V.

Lydia [*entering: to* DE CYGNEROI, *who has begun and torn up several letters*] — Well, my dear M. de Cygneroi, you dine with us, don't you?

De Cygneroi [*rising*] — Ah! is it you, madame? — No, we shall not have the honor of seating ourselves at your table. In fact, that is what I was writing to you about, not being sure of seeing you.

Lydia — What ! you going off like that, without even saying good-bye to me? while as for me, I should be most happy to begin the soonest I can with Mme. de Cygneroi, whom I find charming, relations which will ripen into friendship, I hope !

De Cygneroi — Unfortunately, this call is the only one we shall have the honor to make on you. We are about to start for Brittany.

Lydia — This very day?

De Cygneroi — This evening.

Lydia — And you stay there — ?

De Cygneroi — The whole year.

Lydia — And after that your whole life?

De Cygneroi — It is very possible.

Lydia — In other words, you don't wish me to see your wife again?

De Cygneroi — Good Heavens, madame, there are situations —

Lydia — In short, you don't wish your wife to become the friend of your — former friend.

De Cygneroi — And above all, of Don Alfonso's former friend.

Lydia [*agitatedly, changing her tone*] — Who told you about Don Alfonso?

De Cygneroi — What difference does that make? Do you deny the fact?

Lydia — There's only one man in the world who could have told you that, and it's Lebonnard.

De Cygneroi — And if Lebonnard did tell me that, he must have told me something else, I suppose?

Lydia — One can put no confidence in anybody, then ! O Lebonnard, it's shameful !

De Cygneroi — All the more that you had paid for his silence.

Lydia [*sighing*] — Yes, you are right, M. de Cygneroi : Mme. de Cygneroi and I ought not to contract a friendship. Don't hold ill-will towards me — good-bye.

De Cygneroi — I have no sort of right to hold ill-will towards you. You are free in your actions. Only —

Lydia — Only — ?

De Cygneroi — Only you'll admit that it wasn't worth the trouble, having the Spanish remembrances you have, to be taken sick when I announced my marriage to you. And if

I announced my marriage to you so bluntly, it was because something in me told me you were fooling me, though you had sworn a hundred times that I was your first love.

Lydia — It was true.

De Cygneroi — Only Don Alfonso was your first lover! I know these feminine subtleties. But as we're on this, I would like to know, just out of curiosity, how you, young, handsome, rich, respected, well-born, intelligent, and above all, able to wait, came to start in on that Iberian with the fool smile.

Lydia — I was bored, that's how it began; he bored me, that's how it ended. Such in one word is the history of women's first slips.

De Cygneroi — And the other slips?

Lydia — Come very naturally in sequence, like drafts of air through open doors.

De Cygneroi — Is it really you talking? *You?*

Lydia — Oh, my dear, you ask me questions, and I answer them in the language that accords with my actual position. Those who say they stopped after one first slip, above all after one first deception, and that, betrayed and hurled back into solitude by the man they loved, they silently and resolutely retraced their steps in place of continuing to descend — they lie, you take my word for it.

De Cygneroi — That you loved or thought you loved Don Alfonso before you knew me, I can regret for you, but it doesn't concern me; but that during our intimacy you took up Don Alfonso again on the same footing as of old — that isn't easy to name, or, to speak more plainly, it is much too easy.

Lydia — Well, it was still a proof of love I gave you, and I deserved all the more credit because I couldn't boast of it.

De Cygneroi — That was all it lacked.

Lydia — Don Alfonso, jealous like all Spaniards, and what was more, exasperated by my withdrawal, threatened to send you my letters —

De Cygneroi — The scoundrel!

Lydia — Oh yes, the scoundrel! — unless I consented to reclaim them on the old conditions. All I could extort was that the restitution should be made at Lebonnard's house instead of his.

De Cygneroi — And why should you prefer Lebonnard's?

Lydia — Lebonnard was your friend, his house was near yours: that consoled me a little.

De Cygneroi — And how many letters did you write to Don Alfonso?

Lydia — Two!

De Cygneroi — Always by twos.

Lydia — And a little insignificant note he gave me back into the bargain.

De Cygneroi — Into the *bargain!* But instead of consenting to that shameful traffic, it would have been better to tell me everything.

Lydia — I did think strongly of it, but he would have sent my letters to my husband. It was Othello coupled with Iago. There was no wrong side to the cloth, as you can see. Oh, but I have suffered deeply! Well, scarcely delivered from that horrible nightmare, — there's no other word, — and when at last I could call myself entirely yours, certain that you would know nothing, — at the moment I was going to be happy, you left me abruptly. It was the punishment I deserved, I know; but a punishment is none the easier to bear because it is deserved! just the contrary. Do you know that an hour after your departure I poisoned myself? Without Lebonnard I should have died.

De Cygneroi — And then, out of gratitude —

Lydia — Not even that, my friend! When I had come back to health, everything was relaxed inside me, and the moral sense was annihilated. I had a sort of thirst for evil. I had arrived at curiosity of emotions with no to-morrow, caprices without remorse, anonymous meetings. Love had made me suffer so much, he had humiliated me so much, that I wanted to dishonor him, to tear off his wings, to drag him through the mud. Poor Lebonnard! — I ask you for the sake of asking, if it was he that could give me back my lost ideal? Where was my head? Pshaw, no! Lebonnard impassioned would be the most comical thing imaginable. I should never forget it and I should always be laughing at it.

De Cygneroi — Wretched creature! where did you get to?

Lydia — You ask me to tell you everything, and I'm telling you everything. What is it to you that I've been the mistress — oh, the vile word! but it has to be spoken — that I've been the mistress of this man or that, and that the memory of the one makes me want to cry, and the memory of the other makes me want to laugh!

De Cygneroi — It is to me — it is to me that there was a portion of your life which was mine, during which I thought myself loved by you and during which I was deceived ; it is to me, besides, that you have been laughing at me, and that after having been ridiculous to you, I am so to myself — for after all, if I went to Lyons and Havre during that time, it was because I loved you.

Lydia — Is that true?

De Cygneroi — Certainly it's true : why else should I have gone?

Lydia — Oh, how happy you make me ! Reassure yourself — you have not been ridiculous ; I have never loved any one but you. Whatever I may have *done*, I *thought* only of you, and your image was always there. Imagine — one evening not long ago, I wanted to see once more that apartment at Havre where we passed such sweet hours together. I set out; I arrived all alone at that hotel, at the same hour we two had arrived, and the same date, the thirtieth of June. There were the same places, there were the same people, there was the same night — starry, transparent, balmy. One would have said that Nature had made herself my accomplice. Nothing was changed, except that you were no longer there, that you no longer loved me, and that you were by another woman's side — that is, that death reigned instead of life ! I looked at myself in the hotel mirror. Was it I? I could not recognize myself ! Any one that saw me would have taken me for insane. I said to myself, " And yet I am not homely ! why doesn't he love me any more? " I did my hair in the way you liked, that time when you did like something about me. I passed the whole night that way, remembering, crying, waiting. The power of memory ! It kept seeming to me you were just going to open the door. Day broke, and you had not come. There were geraniums on the mantel; I picked off a blossom and put it in this locket, which has never left me since. [*Kisses the locket.*] It is so sweet to believe in something, even if it's only a flower ! — Ah, don't let's talk any more about all this !

De Cygneroi — And on the other side of the locket, I suppose, is Lord Gamberfield's portrait?

Lydia — Well, truly, you are astonishing, you men ! You don't understand that when you have deserted us we can't pass our lives in tears. We have to try and forget you, and after all we are flesh and blood like you. Why, in this

world where nothing is eternal, should nothing be eternal but grief?

De Cygneroi [*looking her square in the eyes*] — I understand Don Alfonso, who is handsome, so it seems; I understand Lebonnard, who is amusing: but I don't understand Lord Gamberfield, who is grotesque.

Lydia — You understand the first two already — thank you! I am going to make you understand the other one. He is not so grotesque as you think. He has cut off his whiskers; he wears mustaches; his hair is not so red — it is true there's not so much of it; he has grown a little thinner, and he speaks French better. That front tooth he lost he has had put back; you'd vow it was natural — it's actually the finest one he's got. He is a man of good breeding, of very old family, Member of Parliament, immensely rich, which doesn't hurt anything — £25,000 a year. He is going to marry me; I shall be a peeress of England. Tastes change with age. And besides, just as you come to love passionately women we find stupid and homely, because the charms they have are appreciable only by men, just so there are men insignificant and grotesque to you, who have irresistible qualities for us. For us women there are no homely men, there are no stupid men; there are two classes of men, — those who don't love us, who are like everybody, and those who do love us, who are not like anybody. The human heart! the human heart! Mystery.

De Cygneroi — So you love Lord Gamberfield better than you love me!

Lydia — More — I'm not sure about that; but differently, I am certain. Human nature has successive evolutions; and God has had the provident kindness, wishing to lead us up to the grave without too much fatigue for us, to scatter certain surprises around the bends of the road, which give us a fresh desire of life at the moment we think there is no more happiness for us but to die. That's what the ancients called metamorphoses.

De Cygneroi — He is Pygmalion, then?

Lydia — And I am Galatea, under the protection of Venus.

De Cygneroi — And you are to be married —

Lydia — In six months.

De Cygneroi — Did Pygmalion marry Galatea?

Lydia — He did, and had a child by her who was named Paphos, and who, in gratitude at what the goddess had done

for his mother, built her a temple which he called Paphos, and where lovers came to offer their sacrifices. There was, the fable says, a wonderful altar in the open air, on which burned a fire that no rain and no wind could extinguish.

De Cygneroi [*after a pause, speaks very low*] — Suppose we should go there?

Lydia — To Paphos?

De Cygneroi [*nodding his head*] — Yes.

Lydia [*giving him her hand*] — Good-bye, my friend; rejoin your wife, and don't talk any more foolishness. Regret nothing: you have had the best there was of me!

De Cygneroi [*holding her back*] — Who would know of it?

Lydia — Myself first, and then He, who comes here every evening, and then your wife.

De Cygneroi — Fernande would never suspect anything: she's an innocent.

Lydia — And besides, she is nursing. [*Looking him in the face.*] How you despise me, don't you?

De Cygneroi — Lydia!

Lydia — No! Do you see me, loving you afresh and as I loved you of old and as I could love you to-day, losing you again?

De Cygneroi — Why lose me again?

Lydia [*with a movement of despair and struggle*] — You are married! you can't belong to me, you don't belong to yourself any more.

De Cygneroi — You were as much married yourself formerly: each in their turn.

Lydia — Good-bye!

De Cygneroi — And besides, I've no love for Fernande, you know very well.

Lydia — Why did you get married, then?

De Cygneroi — To do something else. I thought I should find an emotion that isn't there.

Lydia — Your word?

De Cygneroi — My word!

Lydia — Of honor?

De Cygneroi — Of honor!

Lydia [*aside*] — What dastardly wretches they are! [*Aloud.*] Then what matter my slips to me and your pledges to you, so long as we still love each other! Leave Paris under some pretext; go off with me, and let us pass a year together

in the bosom of solitude : and that's all I ask of you. In one year I shall be thirty, I shall be an old woman, I will give you back your liberty, I will disappear, you shall never hear me spoken of again. But at least, before reaching that point, I shall have loved utterly.

De Cygneroi — And if in a year I can't leave you?

Lydia — Oh, don't say that to me, I should have too much happiness ! [*He goes to take her in his arms ; she stops him.*] It seems to me I hear your wife ! Go and find her again, take her away, I don't want to see her. Lebonnard will bring you further word from me. One hour more ! and we shall be reunited forever.

De Cygneroi — Forever ! [*Goes out.*

Scene VI.

Lydia [*waving her handkerchief as if to drive away foul air, wiping her mouth, and throwing the handkerchief on the table*] — Pfah !

Lebonnard [*entering*] — Well?

Lydia — Well, you were right, my friend, it turns your stomach. He believed I had been the mistress of that Don Alfonso you invented, of that Lord Gamberfield I have never spoken a word to, and of you who are a loyal and devoted friend. I could have added a Turk and a Chinaman, — he'd have swallowed them like the others. And when he was thoroughly convinced of my infamy, when he thought that, thanks to all these debaucheries, I had become a common woman, something like Mlle. Castagnette — he began to love me, if one may use that sacred word to express the most brutal passion and the basest desire. Ah ! if we knew beforehand what I am just coming to know afterwards ! Pfah ! Get rid of that fellow for me, can't you? If I needn't ever hear him mentioned again, if I could think he was dead, if I needn't know he had ever lived ! I'm going to take the air — I need it. I shall be here for dinner. I never would have believed you could despise so much what you had loved so much. [*Goes out.*

Scene VII.

Lebonnard [*alone*] — She'll be here for dinner. We have it in three quarters of an hour. So I have forty good minutes

before me : that's twenty too many. [*To* De Cygneroi, *who is just entering.*] Got here. I was waiting for you impatiently.

De Cygneroi — You've seen Lydia ?

Lebonnard — She's going away from here. She's packing a little trunk. And you, you've done a fine job ! Damn ! — And your wife ?

De Cygneroi — My wife? you're going back to Paris with her.

Lebonnard [*aside*] — " Get rid of that fellow for me ! " — " Get rid of my wife for me ! " — They are perfect ! [*Aloud.*] And what excuse shall I make to your wife ?

De Cygneroi — I told her I'd just got a dispatch that obliged me to leave at once.

Lebonnard — You didn't tell her where for ?

De Cygneroi — I didn't tell her where for.

Lebonnard — A dispatch here while you're making a call. She believed it ?

De Cygneroi — She'd believe any amount of others.

Lebonnard — She is ingenuous.

De Cygneroi [*after a pause*] — Yes.

Lebonnard — Then you are in love with Mme. de Morancé ?

De Cygneroi — In love ! In love ! The phrase is — ingenuous. I don't know if I'm in love : all I know is that there's a sensation there, and there aren't so many of those in the world, especially agreeable ones, that a man should let them slip by. I told you I was always frank and sincere : well, the truth is, I've no amusement the whole time between a nursing woman and a sucking baby. " Lolo, baby, dodo, tata," — there's no fun in that forever, and yet I've got to have that sort of thing for at least a year, and then begin all over again. It's tedious !

Lebonnard — And your tirades this morning ?

De Cygneroi — That was this morning. They remain true theoretically, like a lot of other tirades, and they'll do for another time.

Lebonnard — Come, think a little ! A woman you found tiresome —

De Cygneroi — Oh, my dear fellow, it isn't the same woman ! If you had seen her just now, — if you had seen her moist eyes, if you had felt her burning sigh, if you knew what that Gamberfield has made of her ! There's a fellow, if he ever falls into my hands, — and he's sure of doing that to find out what's become of his wife-to-be, — there's a fellow that's bound to have

his currant-jelly face and his timothy whiskers set off with the finest pair of cuffs.

Lebonnard — As to me, I can't know at all what Gamberfield has made of Lydia : I was earlier, I am sorry to say.

De Cygneroi — Lebonnard, you'd better not call that up again. I shall strangle you, you see, while I'm waiting for the other fellow.

Lebonnard — Then you're going to leave ?

De Cygneroi — In ten minutes.

Lebonnard — You'll write to your wife ?

De Cygneroi — Yes, yes. I'll do everything that's necessary, don't worry.

Lebonnard — But suppose she learns the truth ?

De Cygneroi — She wouldn't believe it.

Lebonnard — Suppose they should prove it to her ?

De Cygneroi — You're to prove the contrary.

Lebonnard — And suppose she gets bored and revenges herself ?

De Cygneroi — She ? Never ! She'll never dream of it. Fortunately, she's got religion, and women like her don't have lovers, my dear fellow. It's good for —

Lebonnard [*aside*] — Admirable ! Men think they are jealous of certain women because they're in love with them ; it isn't true, — they're in love because they are jealous, which is very different. Prove to them that there's no reason why they should be jealous, and they perceive immediately that they're not in love.

De Cygneroi — What are you muttering to yourself there ?

Lebonnard — Excuse me, my dear fellow. Enough of this joking. Then you've fully decided to run off with Lydia ?

De Cygneroi — Yes.

Lebonnard — Which will last —

De Cygneroi — As long as it may, — perhaps six months, perhaps always ; till she loves me alone, as she loved all the rest.

Lebonnard — Then you must know the whole truth. Not a word of what I told you is true. Mme. de Morancé —

De Cygneroi [*interrupting*] — Thanks, Lebonnard, thanks, my excellent friend. Unfortunately, I know all that. A man tells his friend, in a moment of expansion, what he knows about the woman he has loved, because he thinks he doesn't love her any longer ; and then, when he sees that he loves her still, he

tries to take back what he has said and make things up again. Too thin, my boy, too thin!

Lebonnard — You don't believe me?

De Cygneroi — No, my boy, no.

Lebonnard — I affirm that Don Alfonso never existed. I am sorry to dispel that illusion, but he never existed.

De Cygneroi [*looking at his watch*] — Then it was Don somebody else, but it was Don somebody. My dear fellow, a woman who says, in the tone she said it to me, this phrase: "I was bored, that's how it began; he bored me, that's how it ended!" — a woman who expresses a state of mind in that way has gone through that state of mind, you hear me. Whether the man calls himself Alfonso or Galaor matters very little, — there's been a man.

Lebonnard — By everything that's most sacred in the world, that first lover is a pure invention. You were the first yourself.

De Cygneroi [*somewhat shaken*] — Perhaps; but that fellow Lord Gamberfield has existed. I've seen *him*. And besides, whether there's been three of them, whether there's been two, whether there hasn't been but one, — so long as there's been any of it at all, that's enough.

Lebonnard — There haven't been three, there haven't been two, there hasn't been one, there hasn't been anybody.

De Cygneroi — Would you kindly tell me, then, what interest Mme. de Morancé could have in making up those taradiddles for me?

Lebonnard — The pleasure of paying you back for your jealousy.

De Cygneroi — But on the contrary, she knew very well that I should despise her after such confessions, and never would see her again as long as I lived!

Lebonnard — How well men know themselves! It's a pleasure to see.

De Cygneroi — And besides, you weren't always there. There's been something, and something positive, that's obvious. It would be so natural! A woman alone, deserted!

Lebonnard — Mme. de Morancé was once at Havre and once at Lyons, with you. All the rest I invented myself, on my word of honor! And God knows what trouble I had to make her accept it, to make her understand it, to make her repeat the part she played just now, — very well, it would seem. Make

up your mind, my poor friend, she is irreproachable, and the spotted cat I've raked up isn't the skunk you imagine!

De Cygneroi — Nothing? nothing? nothing?

Lebonnard — Nothing.

De Cygneroi — Not the least little bit —

Lebonnard — Of a smitch or a skig.

De Cygneroi — So what she was just now —?

Lebonnard — She only had the air of being so, to pay you back. But now she sees that you love her still, she wants you to know — that is what I am charged to tell you — that you will find her once more, chaste, calm, modest, in a little house she has just rented some miles from Paris, where she will live all alone, and where you may come and see her whenever you are able, — for she will have no elopement nor a scandal. You can pass the day as of old, making music, talking, or reading. When you can't come she will write to you, through me.

De Cygneroi — Signing "Alfred"?

Lebonnard — "Alfred!" How sweet a life!

De Cygneroi — Wait a minute! Wait a minute!

Lebonnard — What's got hold of you?

De Cygneroi — I don't know: something ails me. Emotion, doubtless! The happiness of being still beloved. [*Calling.*] Fernande! Fernande!

Lebonnard [*aside*] — Aha, now!

Scene VIII.

Fernande [*entering*] — Here I am, dear: what is it?

De Cygneroi — Where's your hat?

Fernande — Over there.

De Cygneroi [*getting the hat and putting it on her head askew*] — And the babelet?

Fernande — Here he is.

De Cygneroi — Let's go, then!

Fernande — But that dispatch?

De Cygneroi — I got another one. Countermanded! We're going back to Paris.

Fernande — Oh, you are not going to leave me. How delightful! [*Jumps for joy.*] I must go and say good-bye to Mme. de Morancé.

De Cygneroi — There's no use.

Fernande — Oh, what a funny house!

Lebonnard — Will you explain to me —

De Cygneroi — Huh! don't you understand? What a chump you are! Why, you rascal, if it comes to living with an honest woman I don't need Mme. de Morancé: I've got my own.

Lebonnard [*playing surprise*] — Hoh! [*Aside.*] Must put on an air of astonishment: if I don't he'll begin all over again. [*To* CYGNEROI.] She'll die of it this time.

De Cygneroi — No, you can arrange that.

[*Escapes with his wife, the maid, and the baby.*

SCENE IX.

Lebonnard — So it ends with the woman's hate and the man's contempt. Then what's the good?

Lydia [*entering*] — Have they gone?

Lebonnard — Yes.

Lydia [*ringing*] — For always?

Lebonnard — For always.

Lydia [*to the servant who comes in*] — Serve the dinner.

Lebonnard [*to the servant*] — And don't shake up the wine. [*To* LYDIA, *pressing her hand.*] The dregs are too bitter!

POSTSCRIPT BY THE AUTHOR.

(Preface to the play in collected edition.)

HERE is a little comedy which has aroused quite as much criticism and discussion as its bulkier sisters. What the author has been chiefly reproached with, is having insulted love. The author will content himself with replying to his accusers that perhaps they were in the wrong to use the word "love" there, where there was no place to employ it. He is well aware that the dictionary of our great linguist and positivist Littré gives this sufficiently elastic definition of love: "The sentiment of affection of one sex for the other;" whence it would follow that it is enough for two persons of different sexes to have a sentiment of affection for each other, that they may be in love. The dictionary does not say, it is not its business to say, whether the two persons must be always the same or if a change is authorized: the whole question lies there, nevertheless, and by extending the word thus defined to its ultimate bounds and consequences, we shall arrive at giving it for synonyms "pas-

sion," "gallantry," "caprice," and "libertinage," as the sentiment of affection can be found in this or that proportion in these different manifestations. But the "Dictionary of the French Language" indicates only, so to say, the exterior signification of words in use. See then if in his "Dictionary of Medicine and Physiology," M. Littré, no longer merely a linguist, but a physiologist and philosopher, and moreover in collaboration with Charles Robin, — see if M. Littré does not define love in a fashion at once more precise and more extended: —

"Love — In physiology, the group of cerebral phenomena which constitute the sexual instinct. They themselves become the points of departure for a number of acts and actions, varying with individuals and social conditions, which render this group of phenomena very complex, and which often in turn are the source of aberrations which the hygienist and the medical legist are called on to anticipate or interpret, in order to know whether they have been accomplished under normal conditions or those of mental alienation. In the greater part of the mammifers, and sometimes in man, the instinct of destruction comes into play at the same time as the sexual bent."

It is from the authentication of all these physiological phenomena, ranging from the sexual instinct to murder and madness, that have sprung, are springing, and will spring all the dramas, all the comedies, and all the romances; especially if you add the definition of Voltaire, in his "Philosophical Dictionary": —

"Love — There are so many kinds of love that one does not know which to address himself to in order to define it."

Have we to-day, we who are writing this preface, any pretension to be the one who shall define love? Far from us be that thought: more than any one else we are convinced that if there have been composed before us, and if there are still to be composed after us as in our own time, myriads of works on love, it is because no one knows, and no one ever will know absolutely, what he can rely on concerning this *sentiment of affection*, as varied and as uniform, as fixed and as mobile, as humanity itself, of which it is the principle and the eternity. Perhaps it may be well to content ourselves, for ultimate definition, with this very simple formula: "It's so." The truth is that when we have expounded all the reasonings, given all the counsels, created all the obstacles possible for a being who truly loves, he answers you, "I love," and there is nothing more to say to him, without being a fool. No other way of convincing him is left, except to kill him, — an irrefutable argument, which, despite the reputation that has been given us, we recommend using but moderately.

But in order that Pascal's sentence, "The heart has reasons the reason knows nothing of," may be just, that all our harangues may remain powerless before the single phrase "I love," he who says that word must love truly; and whatever Voltaire may say of it, love that has the right to be called love carries with it certain signs that separate it from passion, from gallantry, and from the other physio-

logical grades we spoke of above, which the "Dictionary of Medicine" foreshows, and which cause the romances, the comedies, the tragedies, and the dramas on love to be eternally rewritten.

There is always, I am well aware, one moment when the physical expression of the sentiment of one sex for the other is invariably the same, and serves uniformly and finally for all the different states of love; but that is not a reason for concluding that there is only one love. It is with these different states as with different lodgers in the same house: they do not know each other, they do not even bow when they meet; they use the same stairway, that is all.

Evidently it was in the general sense that Sarcey took the word "Love" when he wrote his article on the "Wedding Call," — an article I have before me, and which I ask his permission shortly to quote, with an intention he already divines. I have the gift — and very proud of it I am — of preoccupying, of charming, of stirring up, of irritating — in short, of impassioning Sarcey, who is certainly one of the most sincere and most loyal critics that have ever existed. He has another great quality; that is, of the first impression, like the public itself. That first impression he utters immediately in his first article, without weighing it, without otherwise discussing it. Some days later, if the work seems to him worth the trouble, he returns to hear it anew; and if he gains an impression contrary to the first, he utters that with the same frankness. He does not blush at being deceived; he does not believe himself infallible, at least in his judgments. I will not say as much of his ideas and his theories, which he believes to be absolute truth, and imposes, or rather sometimes exposes, with more violence than authority. This fashion of being altogether right does not displease me; it is a little my own. If it smells of obstinacy, even of pride, it proves conviction, and the criticism takes on more color, movement, and interest. Sarcey is enthusiastic and crabbed. He is as ready to proclaim you a great man as to call you an idiot. A work pleases him, and it is a masterpiece; it displeases him, and it is a dunghill. It would be as amusing as impossible, and above all fruitless, to argue with him. He answers, if you venture on it, "You understand nothing about it," and turns his back on you, convinced that that argument is irrefutable. He cannot always be just, because he is impassioned; but he is always impartial. He seats himself in his stall without prejudgment of any sort, whoever may be the author of the piece, with the liveliest desire to be interested, and especially amused. No one is more easily disarmed by laughter or tears than he; at heart he loves best to laugh. What he will endure least is that a theatrical work shall compel him to reflect. He thinks he reflected once for all while at the Normal School: he has classified his reflections; he has made them about laws, politics, literature, religion, and he does not wish

them disarranged. That is where I sometimes upset him, and he consigns me to all the devils; but I do not go there, and we remain good friends. He has certainly written more than a fat volume on me alone. I have always desired to thank him publicly for the interest in me he has so often evinced. I will do it to-day, with the greater pleasure that we shall perhaps find ourselves more completely in accord than when he declared "La Dame aux Camélias" and "Le Demi-Monde" to be two masterpieces, — my modesty not permitting me on that point to go as far as he.

Here is Sarcey's article: —

Feuilleton in the *Temps*, October 16, 1871. Theatrical Chronicle.

How embarrassed one is in stating his judgment on the younger Alexandre Dumas' new piece! This is because in order to state a judgment it is necessary to have one, very sharp and very precise, which can be formulated and upheld by proofs. The impression one carries away from that strange work is of the most mingled character; he finds it hard on leaving to compose his spirits, to collect his ideas, to recognize himself in this huddle of contradictory sentiments through which he has passed. I saw the first representation, and I returned to the Gymnase to listen to the fourth; I was able on that second hearing to study at leisure the public, — a public which this time was the true one, the one which pays, which carries to the theater the prejudices and the taste of the day. I am still not quite settled.

Talent there is in it, and much; that admits of no question. A work cannot be mediocre that excites a curiosity so lively and discussions so impassioned. And wit! that wit which makes everything go in France — the piece is full of it; it is a glittering fire of words, some profound and bitter, others humorous, all bold and novel. *Why then do we not taste in hearing them a pleasure without alloy? Why do they make you experience that singular sensation of a cold blade some one is about to slip into your back? Brrr — ! you shrug your shoulders and shiver! Why do you depart from there oppressed, nervous, discontented with yourself and everybody else, finding the boulevard less gay, the gas-lights less brilliant, and the women less enticing? Why do you feel thoroughly morose, and as though irritated with the human race? Why can you not unravel in yourself the cause of this mournful surprise and this evil humor?*

The effect is certain. I have experienced it in myself, and all that I have questioned are unanimous on that point. They are entertained, because to experience a strong sensation, even though not an agreeable one, is still an entertainment; because anything is better than insipid mediocrity; because there is a certain element of secret pleasure in that irritation, which arouses and titillates the fibres of taste. But it is not that full and sweet satisfaction, that quietude of contentment, given by truly good works which are at the same time beautiful. This is not saying that if out of all that sparkle of wit I was dazzled with for an hour, there remained to me on leaving the theater only a sort of enervation, which outside was transmuted into either a dull wrath or a dreadful moral fatigue, it was necessarily the fault of the author. I am perhaps still ignorant exactly where it lies; but to harry up people is not the goal of art, it is the reverse of art.

Let him try to instruct me, well and good; let him sadden my soul, I consent to it: but I wish that sadness to be open and tender; I wish that instruction to contain a pleasure from satisfied sensibility; I wish — I do not know just what I

wish. I know to a wonder what I do not wish: I do not wish to be harried up, — there! Is that intelligible? Dumas perpetually gives me morality: I listen to it, I find it sound, and I go out worse than I came in. Reformed? that is not in question: the theater never reformed anybody, and it is not a sermon I go there after. But anyway he might broaden my spirit, and here all my being shrinks. It seems as if a sharp dry wind, one of those east winds that set the nerves on edge, had blown over my face and puckered up the corners of my lips. Oh, how gladly one would break a dish or a chair!

I am well aware that this is not a judgment I am formulating: it is only a sensation I am depicting. But surely one cannot bar out feeling from his criticism? I appeal to all who have seen the new piece; I appeal to all you who will see it — for it is highly probable you will all go there. Admirers or adversaries, is not this what you have experienced? The degree does not matter: each feels as he can. But did you laugh a frank and wholesome laugh? Did you weep kind soft tears? You didn't, did you? And if you did laugh — I listened to it yesterday, that laugh excited by certain phrases of the younger Dumas, and studied its special qualities of sound: it is the scandal laugh. It bears some relation to the one you hear at the Comédie Français, when there are a great many women in the audience, and some comedy of Molière is being played where the word *lavement* comes in, or some other that sounds to modern ears like an incongruity. The reason is that Dumas talks on the stage about things which in the moral order make an effect on the imagination that is — medicinal. Oh yes, we take medicine in private life, but good heavens! we don't get fifteen hundred people together to tell them the consequences. We attend to these dirtinesses in the silence of the closet.

Dumas' entire play is summed up in this sentence, which one of the characters utters at the end: "There's all that is left of adultery, — the woman's hate and the man's contempt. Well, then, what's the good of it?" And on this fine axiom, here is Dumas, enchanted to have founded a moralist! He may be sure that moral will never persuade anybody! Can you hinder anything with a "what's the good?" Indeed! one might answer Dumas junior: what's the good? to be happy six months, a year, ten years, — what do I know how long? All men are not like the one you represent; all love affairs are not conducted in such a cruel and ignoble fashion! There are, even in irregularity, honest hearts which respect their sworn faith all the more that the oath has not received the legal sanction. From the moment I have nothing but "what's the good" before me, I'll risk it.

Nor in the main would Dumas achieve any greater results against vice by undertaking to combat it on the stage in some other fashion. I return to that still: the theater never reformed and never will reform anybody. It can act only by opening the soul to higher ideas, to nobler sentiments; dispose it to make good resolutions, and render their execution easier for it. But what enrages me against him is the claim he sets up to be fashioning morality, when there is nothing — well, I will soften the word, for it burns my lips — more demoralizing than this sort of spectacles.

He familiarizes imaginations with this idea of adultery, which we wish to make shocking to them. He teaches them to consider it in cold blood. For Dumas does not suspect this: that what makes the lack in his analysis, fine and cold as steel, is his not loving women, or if you like, woman. She is for him only a subject of dissection. He does not compassionate her fall, he does not get angry at it: in this performance of misery, wounds, and blood, he sees only a "what's the good?" Take and wring this new comedy, and you will squeeze out ingenious ideas, brilliant phrases, theories where truth assumes the air of paradox; but I will bet my head that not one moving phrase, not one poor little tear will drop. It is as dry as a chip.

I am losing my temper, and I am wrong. It is because, really, I am angry with myself for admiring so greatly what seems to me so detestable. I am wasting breath, but what would you have? It is so personal, so venturesome, so brilliant; there is in it such a sureness of hand, such a powerful weightiness of execution; all this brutality is covered up by so much wit that there is no means of resisting it. We are furious with that pestilent fellow, but he inveigles and he vanquishes; we let ourselves accept whatever he says.

You have heard of that old-time preacher, Father Andrew, who preached virtue in language and with similes fit to make a dragoon blush. None the less he was applauded and laughed with: he had good humor and talent. Dumas resembles him. He gives the best of counsels to the world, in the language that adorns at once the manuals of physiology and Marcelin's "Parisian Life." It all goes, through force of wit. But since he has so much, why not use it on something else? Again Dumas has won the bet he made against the impossible: he is well ahead! They are saying everywhere in Paris, at this moment: "Nobody in the world but him could have made that go down! What audacity and what talent!"

And as for me, I whisper, in the words of the play, What's the good? There is plenty of audacity in pure waste and talent ill employed! He writes plays now in the same style as his prefaces. There is the same taste for physiological and moral studies, the same art of setting off commonplace maxims of virtue by a bold cynicism of metaphors; and the curiousness of crude details expressed mere crudely still. I seem to see in them the libertinism of degraded imagination working itself up: Michelet's "Love," without Michelet's outpourings of tenderness.

And after all this, I have still not said what the question raised in the "Wedding Call" is. This is because in truth it is no serious task. Play there is none, properly speaking. The story is utterly preposterous. Never could it be admitted that a woman who had retained any dignity in her fall would lend herself to the horrible comedy she plays to unmask her bygone lover. This is all Greek to you; but it would require entering into too many details to explain more clearly. Go and see the play. It is worth the trouble. I have seen it twice, and it has passionately interested me, the second time as much as the first. You may be harried up, furious; it will never leave you indifferent. There is not a single tiny spot for inattention and yawning.

Moreover, I should have some scruple about telling you the drama. Dumas, by an exceedingly bold and dangerous manœuvre, to which he is wonted, has contrived to keep the public mystified up to the very last scene. Authors commonly make a confidant of the public by half letting it into the secret of the intrigues they are weaving: Dumas has preferred to make it a dupe, sure of mastering the ill humor of that deception. There is no need, therefore, of spoiling his subject by an exact analysis.

Well, my dear Sarcey, as I said to you above, we are in accord. This impression you have experienced, the actors at the rehearsals have experienced like you and before you; and greatly pleased I am, for that impression, profound and almost mournful, is what I wished to be experienced. I was not framing an idyll, I was framing a satire; more than a satire, an execution. One should not strike a woman even with roses, says the Oriental proverb; but for the man, it is an excellent thing to strike him when he deserves to be struck, and it is the man I was striking. I denounced, I betrayed my sex for the benefit of woman, whom you accuse me of not

loving. Can one prove to people that he loves them only by compassionating their slips and weeping over their sins, and has not the proverb "he who loves much punishes much" its reason for existence with him who has charge of souls? You reproach me also for treating adultery as a trifle; — the bogus kind, yes. Mme. de Morancé speaks lightly of the first three lovers she had, but only because she did not have them; and adultery is to her a thing so serious that she lends herself, in order to know its depths and save herself from them, to this hoax you aver that no woman would lend herself to. And Hermione, when she listens to Orestes' declaration that he loves her, and when she promises to marry him if he will kill Pyrrhus — does she not lend herself to a very different combination from Mme. de Morancé's? But, you will tell me, "Andromache" is a tragedy. So is the "Wedding Call." It has not five acts, it is not in verse, it is not by Racine unfortunately; laughter often breaks out there, because we often laugh around those who are suffering: but it is a tragedy, — it is the greatest, the most formidable tragedy of woman. Celibacy, marriage, and adultery — that is the tragic trilogy where women's life struggles, that is whence we dramatic poets can draw eternally, but the one of the three phases where the tragedy is the most poignant is evidently the last, since not alone the ideal, but modesty, honor, reputation, conscience, the woman's very life, are at stake! And you would not give the theater, which, if it has not the merit of reforming, has the right of warning and the right of ascertaining — you would not give the theater the power of saying to the woman: "Take care: at the bottom of this illegitimate love where you are risking your ideal, your modesty, your honor, your reputation, your conscience, your life, there may well remain to you, along with dishonor and remorse, only your hate for the beloved man and the beloved man's contempt for you. Look, if only for once, if only for an hour, look at the abyss, measure the fall, breathe the miasms, and save yourself still if there is time!" All men are not thus, you tell me, and there are those for whom the oath is all the more sacred that it has not been made according to law; — they are rare. The case I submit to you presents itself not ninety-nine times out of a hundred, but nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand. That is why I have the right to submit it to you.

You might tell me, apropos of another comedy of mine which you fought still more sharply in its time, "The Women's Friend," — you might tell me that you knew women better than I, and that you had often been their confidant. I have no need to remind you, my dear Sarcey, that it is not alone by what women tell us that we have to know them, but also and above all by what they do not tell us. If they knew themselves well enough for us to understand what they are, they would not so often fall into the snares men lay for

them — gross snares, of which in this play I have shown them the mechanism and the danger. No matter. Since a number of women have given you their confidences, you must have remarked that those confidences all have the same point of departure: a first error in love affairs. You have not failed to meet women who, well born, rich, with good connections and good instincts, have slipped up not once but many times, and fallen from that world where I left Mme. de Morancé, into that *Half-World* [Demi-Monde] you love so well, where I made Mme. de Santis fall, to the threshold of which I led Mme. de Lornan. Ask these outcast women how they came to tumble from marriage into gallantry, and from respect into scorn: they will all tell you, if they are sincere — and women are always sincere when sincerity can be an excuse for them — they will all tell you what Mme. de Morancé tells: the ideal in the first instance, spite in the second, gallantry in the third, letting themselves go in the fourth, curiosity of sensation and finally libertinage in the rest.

This does not seem to you worth the trouble of saying, and saying rudely, with asperity, and by utilizing wit, laughter, and all the surprises of the theater. You would have there consolations, pityings, and tears, counter-pictures perhaps where adulterous love shall be happy; that is, like Cardinal Perron I think, after I have proved that God exists you want me to prove that he doesn't exist, which is equivalent to sustaining a thesis to prove nothing at all. Consolations, pityings, and tears — you will find them, and more than there ought to be of them, in the plays of my brethren. It is by dint of this very emotionalizing and weeping over woman's sin that it has been rendered excusable and easy. But still, since we were at the theatre, I wished that for just this once my data should be fictitious. It is a hoax which Mme. de Morancé plays, on the advice which a true friend of women like you would be the first to give to-morrow to a woman in the same case. "Play for just half an hour the comedy I'll give you the plot of," you would say to her, "and you will know what you can depend on with that man who still occupies your thoughts, and whom you ought to expel from your mind and your heart because he is unworthy of you."

This is pretty exactly what I have tried to say to women in the "Wedding Call": "All this didn't happen, ladies, but it might happen, and then, oh the shame!" It is a little like the story we used to tell at college, of the Provençal who suddenly boxed his boy's ears, and the boy said, "Why, papa, I didn't do anything;" to which he replied, "Then judge a little what it would be if you had done something."

The theater, my dear Sarcey, is not the theater, it is nothing but a show, if, a subject being given, we may not carry it out to its ultimate consequences. It is because it is logical and merciless that it

makes so much use of laughter and of tears. Amid the laughter and tears we slip in the instruction it is our mission to impart, and which the public in its heart takes kindly of us, although it does not profit by it. You, the critic, have no business to say to me, "You ought not to choose such a subject:" you have to see if from the subject chosen I have drawn all the advantage I might draw. You regret that in the "Wedding Call" there was not a tear: that tear ought not to be found there. The dirty linen I washed in public cannot be washed in tears.

Laughter, then, sufficed me; acrid, bitter, white-hot laughter, such as we have to apply in certain cases. I know a young mother who worshiped her baby, who worshiped a little dog. The little dog, worshiped as he was, went mad and bit the baby on the cheek. Do you know what the mother did? She heated a shovel red-hot, and thrust and rubbed the glowing iron into the wound. The baby struggled and cried, the mother paid no attention, and the child was saved. There was a scar, it is true, but it lived. Would you prefer to have had the mother fall to weeping? There are cases when we need to put the shovels in the fire instantly, and adultery is one of those cases. "What does it matter," you say, "if I can be happy a year, ten years, what do I know how long?" And the other party, the woman who has rendered you happy, what becomes of her? She passes to somebody else, or resigns herself: it is no concern of yours. You have been happy, that is the important thing.

Are you sure you are not more cruel with your philosophy than I with my red-hot shovel?

Shall I tell you everything? Why not, as we are conversing and both sincere. When M. de Cygneroi, in his scene with Lebonnard, makes a chemical analysis of adultery, it is I that am speaking. I am with him; for it is not nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand, it is nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of ten thousand, that I disbelieve there is what you call love in adultery. Once out of ten thousand it may exist; that is all I will concede to you. That once my comedy is useless, because the man has said to the woman, "Give me your honor, and I will give you my life." That engagement made and stuck to, we are no longer in adultery, we are in love, and love excuses everything. But as I said to you at the outset, it must be love, true love; and that is as rare as true genius, as true virtue, as true good sense, as all that is true indeed. Many are called, few are chosen, and not all are fit.

Nevertheless, I will acknowledge, passion may sometimes have the honor of being confounded with love. It can deceive others, for it often deceives itself; which is not done by either gallantry, caprice, or libertinage, which know very well and beforehand what they want. Passion has ardors, sincerities, eloquences, often irresistible. It can even attain to the merits and the triumphs of love,

if the being who is its sole object remains its sole object during the entire lifetime of the one who experiences it. For example, Des Grieux. Here we are in the midst of passion; and gambling, trickery, murder, make up our hero's train. The object of this passion, Manon, is absolutely unworthy to inspire love. She wins pity only by a punishment she cannot escape; she wins absolution only by a death she cannot shun. She does not atone voluntarily and by an effort of her own. Then why does Des Grieux, amid all his faults, attain elevation to the rank of the true lovers, the immortal lovers? Why do you feel him to be the peer of Paul and Romeo, although Manon be not the peer of Virginia or Juliet? Because the unworthiness of the object no more changes the quality of the love than the coarseness of the glass changes the quality of the wine. As Des Grieux loves no one but Manon; as nothing allows us to suppose, as he could not himself admit the thought, that another woman could ever occupy his heart again; as he leaves her whom he loves only when she is dead, after having done everything to save her, after having wished to die with her, — we descry in that passion, guilty but sole, the same worth as in love.

It is none the less true that — as was said by one of our friends who sought for the true significance of words in analogies rather than in roots — the word *passion* comes from the verb *to pass*. In fact, if passion has for excuse its belief that it must be eternal, it has for ordinary and fatal character the not being so.

However great may be a fire, whatever gleams it may shed on the sky, to whatever extent it may ravage, it always ends by going out; and the more it burns, the more brilliant it is, then the more it leaves behind of ruins, of despair, of misery, of solitude!

Such is passion, — it ravages and consumes by its own fire; while love occupies a whole life, however long it may be, and so that at the hour of death enough is still remaining to fill eternity. You have not loved, if you have not believed that after death you will still go on loving, eternally young, eternally fair, the being you have loved on earth, whether she has gone before you or is to follow you in death. That, without doubt, is why the idea and almost the desire of death so easily unites itself in a man's spirit with the greatest intoxications of love. Life seems too short and too contracted to hold all he experiences, and the eternity which the Divine love promises him seems neither too lofty nor too spacious for the expansion of his terrestrial love. Love, contrary to passion, feeds and renews itself unceasingly from its own hearth, without being able to exhaust itself. It is not the terrestrial fire, it is the divine fire; it is not a chance, it is not an unforeseen shock that gives it birth, it is the universal harmony that creates it. Love is the sun of the soul; and that is why love is all warmth, all movement, all creation, all light. There are not two loves any more than there are two suns. One can

have two passions; he never has two loves! Whoever has loved twice has not loved at all, that is absolute.

The poets, who are, if not the sole, at least the prime confidants of God, — the poets, that is to say, those who know without having learned, those who divine, — the poets are not mistaken in this.

When they wish to introduce into art a new type of love, they never deviate from this principle: one sole love in one sole life. Philemon and Baucis, Hero and Leander, Orpheus and Eurydice, Paolo and Francesca da Rimini, Romeo and Juliet, Paul and Virginia: love single and eternal.

Does one of two lovers remain indifferent or become unfaithful? the love of the other only increases by what the beloved being has lost of its own. It is Dido who dies from the desertion of Æneas; it is Calypso who cannot be consoled for the departure of Ulysses; it is Menelaus who pardons Helen, just as Des Grieux pardons Manon.

Are we mistaken? Have we wrongly glorified love in couples? Does history come, proof in hand, and call upon us to recognize our error? Does it remain evident that Raphael died of the pleurisy and not of his love for La Fornarina; that Petrarch's Laura was an honest wife, mother of a dozen legitimate children; that Tasso loved and sung two different Eleonoras?

The ideal of a single love is so necessary to man's imagination, that we answer truly: "It is you who are deceived, and our memory and our sympathy restore and maintain the tradition of Raphael and La Fornarina, of Laura and Petrarch, of Eleonora and Tasso. They are no longer facts, perhaps: let them become legends."

Such is the distinctive character of love, — unity, eternity; and thence, but on this condition alone, it can exist in all situations, in spite of all obstacles.

This love gives eternity to those who experience it; it gives immortality to those who sing of it. Glory to those who sing of and experience it at once!

Unfortunately, not all poets have the genius of Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare for depicting love; but all have souls elevated enough to perceive it, large enough to comprehend it, delicate enough to respect it; and whoever accuses a poet of having besmirched love will always be making an unjust accusation. Poets sometimes curse love when it has made them suffer or disdained them, never do they scorn it; and as to the satirizing of false lovers they have done, it is only one more homage rendered to the true. It is not insulting a lion to deride an ass wrapped up in his skin.

There, my dear Sarcey, is almost all I have to say to you to-day on this subject; and I think I shall have said quite all, when I have assured you afresh of my sentiments of gratitude and friendship.

GIBOYER'S SON.

By ÉMILE AUGIER.

(Translated for this work by Forrest Morgan.)

[Émile Augier, perhaps next to Dumas junior the most effective French dramatist of the century, was born at Valence in 1820; grandson of Pigault-Lebrun (De l'Épinoy), the novelist and dramatist. He began life as a lawyer, but turned to the stage; at first on lines of conventional sentiment and the Classical school; then he became a social satirist — at first rather light and genial, then increasingly penetrating, mordant, and sometimes intensely bitter. He produced twenty-four plays in all, — the first, "The Hemlock" (classical), in 1844; "An Upright Man," in 1845; then followed "The Adventurers" (1848), "Gabrielle" (1849), "The Flute-Player" (1850), "Diana" (1852), "The Touchstone" (1852), "Philibert" (1853), all except "The Flute-Player" comedies with conventional morals and no purpose but to please. He then began a series of social and political satires, beginning with "M. Poirier's Son-in-Law," in 1854; then came "Olympia's Marriage" and "The Golden Belt" (1855), "Youth" and "The Poor Lions" (1858), "A Fine Marriage" (1859), "Brass" [*Les Effrontés*] (1861), "Giboyer's Son" (1862), whose hero had already figured in the foregoing, "Master Guérin" (1864), "Contagion" (1866), "Paul Forestier" (1868), "The Postscript" (1869), "Lions and Foxes" (1869), "Jean de Thommeray" (1873), "Madame Caverlet" (1876), "The Fourchambaults" (1878). In a few he collaborated with others, but all the strongest work is his own. He wrote other matters of small account; was elected to the Academy in 1858; and died in 1889.]

Author's Preface.

Whatever has been said, this comedy is not a political piece, in the current sense of the word: it is a social piece. It attacks and defends only ideas, an abstraction made from every form of government.

Its proper title would be *The Clericals*, if that vocable were in theatrical currency.

The party it designates counts in its ranks men of all origins, partisans of the Empire as well as partisans of the elder branch and the cadet branch of the Bourbons. Maréchal, actual deputy, the Marquis d'Auberive, and Couturier of Haut-Sarthe, old parliamentarian, — represent in my comedy three fractions of the Clerical party, united in hate or fear of the democracy; and if Giboyer lumps all three under the denomination *Legitimists*, it is because in reality Legitimists alone are logical, and do not renounce assailing the spirit of '89.

The antagonism of the ancient principle and the modern principle — here then is the subject of my play. I defy any one to find a word exceeding this question, and I am in the habit of saying things frankly enough to leave no one the right of making double meanings for me.

Whence come, then, the clamors which have arisen against my comedy? By what Clerical shift has the anger of parties it does not touch been roused against it? By what falsification of my words do people manage to feign belief that I am attacking fallen governments? Certainly, it is adroit tactics for exciting against me a chivalric sentiment which has an echo in all honest hearts; but where are these enemies I have struck to the earth? I see them erect at all the tribunes; they are in train to scale the car of triumph, and when I dare, wretched me, to pull them off by the legs, they turn indignantly around and cry, "Respect the vanquished!"

Really, it is too amusing!

A more plausible reproach they make against me is of having resorted to personalities.

I have resorted to but one; that is Déodat. But reprisals are so legitimate against that insulter, and he is moreover so well armed for self-defense!

As to the important and justly honored statesman I am accused of having put on the stage [Thiers], I protest energetically against that imputation: none of my characters have the least resemblance to him, near or remote. I know the rights and duties of comedy as well as my adversaries; it should respect persons, but it has a right over things. I have seized upon a fact of contemporary history which seemed to me a striking and singular symptom of the confused state of our minds; I have taken nothing but what directly appertains to my subject, and I have taken care to alter the circumstances so as to remove every characteristic of personality. What more can be asked of me?

Shall I answer those who reproach my comedy with having been authorized, — that is to say, with existing? The point is delicate. If it is permissible to compare small things with great, I would ask these precisians, Who ever dreamed of reproaching "Tartufe" with the toleration of Louis XIV.?

Cast of Characters.

Marquis d'Auberive, leading member of Clerical aristocrats.

Count d'Outreville, his kinsman, pupil of the Jesuits.

Baroness Sophie Pfeffers, rich adventuress.

Couturier of Haut-Sarthe, Viscount de Vrillière, Chevalier de Germoise, members of the Conservative Committee.

Mme. de la Vieuxtour, one of the ancient nobility.

Maréchal, parvenu Deputy; his wife; and his putative daughter, Fernande.

Giboyer, venal journalist.

Maximilien Gerard, Maréchal's secretary, protégé of Giboyer.

Dubois, the Marquis' valet.

ACT I.

Scene: Private room of the aged MARQUIS D'AUBERIVE. *Door at end. At the right of the door, a book-case; at the left, case of armor and weapons. Front wing left, a fireplace, near which are a small sofa and a round table. Larger table in the center.*

SCENE I.

MARQUIS *breakfasting at the round table;* DUBOIS, *napkin over arm, holding a bottle of sherry in his hand.*

Marquis — I think my appetite has fully returned.

Dubois — Yes, my Lord Marquis, and returned from far off. Who would say, to see you now, that you were getting over a sickness? You've got a new-married face.

Marquis — Think so?

Dubois — And I'm not the only one. All the old women in the neighborhood say to me: "M. Dubois, that man" — (saving your Lordship's presence) — "that man will get married again, and more likely sooner than later. He's got wife in his eye."

Marquis — Oh! the old women say that, do they?

Dubois — Perhaps they a'n't so far wrong.

Marquis — Understand, M. Dubois, that when one has had the misfortune to lose an angel like the Marquise d'Auberive, he has not the least desire to marry another. Pour me a drink.

Dubois — I understand that; but my Lord Marquis has no heir, and that's very hard lines.

Marquis — And who tells you I could have one?

Dubois — Oh, I'm perfectly sure of it!

Marquis — Do you know it as a Corvisart?[1]

Dubois — Corvisart?

Marquis — I don't care to be a father *in partibus infidelium;*[2] that's why. Widower I am and widower I'll stay: you can tell the old women so.

Dubois — But your name, my Lord Marquis? That old name of D'Auberive, are you going to let that die out? Permit an old servant to feel bad about it.

[1] *I.e.*, from medical examination. Corvisart was a great physician under Napoleon; introducer of auscultation and percussion.

[2] *I.e.*, the titular head of a district actually served by humbler casuals.

Marquis — Great heavens, my good fellow, don't be more royalist than the king!

Dubois — Then what would you have me turn into? If there aren't any more D'Auberives in the world, who shall I serve?

Marquis — You've saved money: you'll live like a business man; you'll be your own master.

Dubois — What a fall! I shall never lift my head again. Your old servant will follow you into the grave.

Marquis — Keeping your distance, please! — You melt my heart, Dubois: dry your tears, everything isn't desperate.

Dubois — What! my master will yield to my humble prayers?

Marquis — No, my good fellow: I've done my time and I am not going back to service. But I cling to my name as much as you can yourself, be assured, and I have found an extremely ingenious combination to perpetuate it without exposing myself.

Dubois — How happy I feel! I don't dare ask your Lordship —

Marquis — And quite right! Stick to that modesty, and let it be enough to know that I am preparing Auberives for you. I am expecting this very day — I am expecting a great deal of company to-day.

Dubois — Oh, best of masters!

Marquis — You are a good fellow, and I shall not forget you.

Dubois [*aside*] — I count on that solid.

Marquis — Clear off the table: I am going for a horseback ride at two.

Baroness Pfeffers [*appearing in the doorway*] — Horseback!

Dubois [*announces*] — Her Ladyship the Baroness Pfeffers!

[*Goes out.*

Scene II.

Marquis — Well, dear Baroness, what can have gained an old bachelor like me the honor of so charming a visit?

Baroness — Really, Marquis, that's what I am wondering. Now that I see you I don't know in the least why I have come, and I've a great mind to go straight back.

Marquis — Now sit down, hateful woman.

Baroness — Not much! What, you close your doors for a week, your people wear tragic faces, you put your friends in a fright, you are already mourned — and when I get inside at you, I surprise you at table!

Marquis — I'll tell you: I'm an old flirt, and I wouldn't show myself for an empire when I'm out of temper; now the gout changes my character entirely; it makes me unrecognizable: that's why I hide.

Baroness — Great relief! I'll hurry and reassure our friends.

Marquis — They are not so anxious as all that. Give me a little news about them.

Baroness — But there's one of them in my carriage waiting for me.

Marquis — I'll send and tell him to please come up.

Baroness — But I'm not sure if — if you know him.

Marquis — What's his name?

Baroness — I met him by chance —

Marquis — And took all the chances of bringing him. [*Rings.*] You are a mother to me. [*To* DUBOIS, *who answers the bell.*] Go down and you will find a clergyman in the Baroness' carriage: tell him I thank him very much for his kind alacrity, but I'm not disposed to die this morning.

Baroness — O Marquis! what would our friends say if they heard you?

Marquis — Pooh! I'm the irrepressible child of the party, that's understood — and its spoiled child. Dubois, say also that the Baroness begs the reverend gentleman to drive home and send her carriage back here for her.

Baroness — Permit —

Marquis — That's all right. — Go on, Dubois. — Now you are my prisoner.

Baroness — But, Marquis, this is hardly proper.

Marquis [*kissing her hand*] — Flatterer! — Sit down, this time, and let's talk of serious things, Madame Egeria. [*Taking a newspaper from the table.*] The gout doesn't hinder me from reading the paper. Do you know poor Déodat's death[1] is a cruel blow?

Baroness — Ah, what a loss! what a disaster for our cause!

Marquis — I have wept for him.

Baroness — What talent! what spirit! what sarcasm!

Marquis — He was the hussar of orthodoxy. He will live in our calendar as the *angelic pamphleteer — conviciator* [reviler] *angelicus.* And now that his grand shade is on deck —

Baroness — You speak very lightly of it, Marquis.

[1] Suspension of Louis Veuillot's paper; *constructive* death of the editor. See article following.

Marquis — When I've wept for him! — let's set to work finding some one to replace him.

Baroness — Say some one to succeed him. Heaven doesn't create two such men in succession.

Marquis — And if I told you I had put my hand on his duplicate? — Yes, Baroness, I have unearthed a devilish, cynical, virulent pen, that crackles and spatters; a lad that will lard his own father with epigrams for a modest compensation, and eat him like celery for five francs more.

Baroness — Allow me: — Déodat was sincere.

Marquis — Stuff! that's the result of the fight: there are no mercenaries any longer in the thick of a battle; the blows they get produce conviction in them. I don't give our man a week to belong to us body and soul.

Baroness — If you have no other guaranties of his fidelity —

Marquis — I have: I've got him.

Baroness — Where?

Marquis — No matter! I've got him.

Baroness — And what are you waiting for before presenting him?

Marquis — For him first, his consent next. He lives at Lyons; I expect him to get here to-day or to-morrow. Give him time to finish his toilet, and I'll introduce him.

Baroness — Meantime, shall I apprise the committee of your find?

Marquis — I beg you, no. — And speaking of the committee, dear Baroness, it would be very kind of you to use your influence over it in a matter which touches me personally.

Baroness — My influence over it is not large.

Marquis — Is that modesty, or the exordium of a refusal?

Baroness — If it absolutely must be one or the other, it's modesty.

Marquis — Well, then, my lovely friend, learn — if you don't know it — that those gentlemen owe you too many obligations to refuse you anything.

Baroness — Because my parlor serves for their meeting-place?

Marquis — Primarily; but the true, the great, the inestimable service you render them every day, is to have superb eyes.

Baroness — Scoffer! it's well for you to pay attention to such things as that.

Marquis — Well for me, yes; but still better for those sedate men, as their chaste vows don't go beyond that mystic sensuality which is the orgy of virtue.

Baroness — You're dreaming!

Marquis — You can rely on what I say. That and nothing else is the reason why all the serious clubs invariably choose for headquarters the drawing-room of some woman, either handsome or clever: you are both, madame — judge of your empire.

Baroness — You are too wheedling: your cause must be detestable.

Marquis — If it was first-rate, I could gain it myself.

Baroness — Come, don't keep me on tenter-hooks.

Marquis — It's just here: we've got to choose our spokesman in the House for the campaign we are preparing against the University [muzzling of Renan]; I want the choice to fall —

Baroness — On M. Maréchal.

Marquis — You have hit it.

Baroness — Are you serious, Marquis? M. Maréchal?

Marquis — Yes, I know — but we've no need of a thunderbolt of eloquence, since we furnish the speech. Maréchal reads as fluently as anybody, I assure you.

Baroness — We've already made him a deputy on your recommendation, and that was a good deal.

Marquis — Allow me! Maréchal is an excellent recruit.

Baroness — You are pleased to say so.

Marquis — How disgusted you are! An old subscriber to the *Constitutionnel* [conservatively liberal organ], a liberal, a Voltairian [anti-clerical], who goes over to the enemy with arms and baggage — what more do you want? M. Maréchal is not a man, my dear: he is the great middle class coming over to us. As for me, I love this honest middle class, which holds the Revolution in horror now it has nothing more to gain by it, which wants to congeal the wave that has floated it in, and reconstruct for its own profit a little feudal France. Let it pull our chestnuts out of the fire and be hanged to it! For my part, it's this cheering spectacle that has put me into humor with politics again. So hurrah for M. Maréchal and his mates, gentlemen of the divine-right middle class! Let's cover these precious allies with honors and glory, till the day when our triumph sends them back to their lasts!

Baroness — But we have plenty of deputies off the same piece: why should we choose the least capable for our spokesman?

Marquis — Once more, it's not a question of capacity.

Baroness — You are a great patron of M. Maréchal's.

Marquis — What if I am? I look on him as a sort of retainer

of my family. His grandfather was farmer under mine; I am his daughter's guardian: those are ties.

Baroness — And you don't tell everything.

Marquis — I tell all I know.

Baroness — Then let me complete your information. Rumor has it that you were not insensible, once on a time, to the charms of the first Mme. Maréchal.

Marquis — You don't believe that silly story, I hope?

Baroness — Faith! You indemnify M. Maréchal so much —

Marquis — That I seem to have damnified him? Oh, good Heavens! who can feel safe from scandal? Nobody; — not even you, dear Baroness.

Baroness — I'd very much like to know what they can say about me.

Marquis — Silly stuff I certainly won't repeat to you.

Baroness — You believe it, of course?

Marquis — God forbid! The likelihood that your late husband married his mother's companion? It threw me into a rage!

Baroness — That was doing such trash too much honor.

Marquis — I answered smartly enough, I assure you.

Baroness — I don't doubt it.

Marquis — All the same, you are right in wanting to marry again.

Baroness — And who told you I want to?

Marquis — It's too bad! you don't treat me as a friend. I deserve your confidence all the more because I don't need it, knowing you as if I had made you. The alliance of a wizard is not to be disdained, Baroness.

Baroness [*seating herself near the table*] — Show your sorcery.

Marquis [*seating himself in front of her*] — Willingly! Give me your hand.

Baroness [*drawing off her glove*] — You'll give it back to me?

Marquis — And I'll help you place it, which is more. [*Examining the Baroness' hand.*] You are handsome, rich, and a widow.

Baroness — One would think herself at Mme. Lenormand's.

Marquis [*still inspecting the hand*] — With so many facilities, not to say temptations, to lead a brilliant and frivolous life, you have chosen to play a part almost austere, a part which demands irreproachable manners — and you have them.

Baroness — If it was a part, you will admit that it very much resembled a penance.

Marquis — Not for you.

Baroness — What do you know about it?

Marquis — I see it in your hand, faith! I see there even that the contrary would have cost you more, owing to the unalterable calm with which nature has endowed your heart.

Baroness [*withdrawing her hand*] — Say at once that I am a monster!

Marquis — All in good time! — The guileless take you for a saint; skeptics for one ambitious of power; I, Guy François Condorier, Marquis d'Auberive, take you simply for a shrewd Berliness, in process of erecting a throne in the midst of the Faubourg St. Germain. You already reign over men, but women resist you: your reputation offends them, and not knowing where to get at you to hurt, they intrench themselves behind that paltry rumor I just told you about. In a word, your veil is too small, and you are searching for one large enough to cover everything. "Paris is well worth a mass," said Henry the Fourth: that's your opinion too.

Baroness — They say we mustn't contradict sleep-walkers; nevertheless, permit me to observe to you that if I wanted a husband, with my fortune and my position in the world I could have found twenty already as easily as one.

Marquis — Twenty, yes; one, no. You forget that pestilent little rumor —

Baroness [*rising*] — None but fools believe that.

Marquis [*rising*] — There's just the *hic*. You are only courted by extremely clever men — too clever! and it's a fool you want.

Baroness — Because — ?

Marquis — Because you don't intend to give yourself a master. You need a husband you can hang up in your drawing-room like a family portrait, nothing more.

Baroness — Have you finished, my dear diviner? There is no common-sense in all that stuff; but you have amused me, and I can't refuse you anything.

Marquis — Maréchal will have the speech?

Baroness — Or I'll lose my name.

Marquis — *And* you shall lose your name — I engage.

Baroness — You do anything you please with me.

Marquis — Ah, Baroness! how quickly I'd take you at your

word if I were only sixty! [DUBOIS *brings in a card on a silver salver.* MARQUIS, *taking the card, reads.*] "Count Hugues d'Outreville." [*To* DUBOIS.] Show him in, good Heavens! show him in — No! tell the Count I'll be with him in a moment. [DUBOIS *goes out.*

Baroness — I am in your way; but it serves you right! There was no need of sending back my carriage.

Marquis — Really, I should introduce this young man to you some day or other; so why not straight off?

Baroness — Who is he?

Marquis — My nearest relation — a poor relation. I have had him come to Paris so I can make his acquaintance before leaving him my fortune.

Baroness — Legitimate curiosity. How does it happen you don't know him?

Marquis — He lives in the County [Venaissin — "Egypt"]: a true feudal gentleman, and the last time I was there, in the lifetime of his good father, twenty years ago, Hugues was seven or eight.

Baroness — He has a fine name.

Marquis — And sports azure with three golden byzants. But don't go to dreaming — he's no husband for you: he lacks all the nullities of your ideal.

Baroness — You don't know him, you said.

Marquis — I know the race: it is violent and colossal. The father and the grandfather were six feet high, shoulders to match, and I recall that when I wanted to dance little Hugues on my knees I had a load of it. But you'll see the lad yourself. I must ask your indulgence for him somewhat; these country gentlemen are not always the pink of high breeding, you know, — big hunters, big eaters, big petticoat-chasers.

Baroness — How shocking!

Marquis — We'll lick him into shape. [*Rings. To* DUBOIS, *who enters.*] Show him in.

Dubois [*announcing*] — His Lordship the Count d'Outreville.

SCENE III.

Marquis [*going to meet him with open arms*] — Ha! come right here! [*Stopping in stupefaction.*] What, is this you, that big boy I jumped —

Count — The fact is, you must consider that I am grown up now, sir.

Marquis [*aside*] — Bean-pole! [*Aloud.*] Excuse my surprise, cousin: I have been used to putting your name on broader shoulders.

Count — Yes, my grandfather and my father were Goliaths: I take after my mother.

Marquis — Well, you are none the less welcome. Thank your stars that you've come to me just on the dot for being presented to the Baroness Pfeffers.

Count [*bowing*] — Her Ladyship is related, I presume, to the Baroness Sophie Pfeffers?

Baroness — That is myself, sir.

Count — What! that model of piety, of austerity, of —

Baroness — Thank you, sir!

Marquis — Why, yes, that model is neither old nor ugly, which surprises you.

Count — I confess — But *gratior pulchro in corpore virtus* [virtue is more pleasing in a beautiful body].

Baroness — Alas, sir, I deserve neither the one nor the other of your compliments.

Count [*abashed*] — Ah, madame, if I could have suspected you knew Latin —

Marquis — Then who did you suspect of knowing it here?

Count — Pardon me, madame, a wholly unmeant familiarity. [*To the* MARQUIS.] How happy M. de Saint-Agathe will be when he learns —

Marquis — And who might M. de Saint-Agathe be?

Count — Have you never heard M. de Saint-Agathe spoken of? You surprise me. M. de Saint-Agathe, nevertheless, is one of our leading lights. I have been so happy as to have him for a tutor, and he has remained my director in all things.

Marquis [*aside*] — This isn't a gentleman: it's a sexton.

Baroness [*aside*] — What simplicity!

Dubois [*entering*] — Her Ladyship the Baroness' carriage is here.

Baroness [*aside*] — Azure with three golden byzants! [*Aloud.*] I will escape, Marquis; I am too much exposed here to the sin of pride. Good-by, Count. Your cousin will honor me by bringing you to see me; but I warn you that flatteries must be left at my drawing-room door. Stay where you are, Marquis; invalids don't go to the doors with guests.

[*Goes out.*

Scene IV.

Count — Is that lady married?

Marquis — Yes, cousin, I have been very sick. Compose yourself: it isn't coming back.

Count — Awfully relieved! And what sickness have you had, pray?

Marquis — The Baroness is a widow. Thank you for the interest you display in her.

Count [*aside*] — He is an original.

Marquis [*aside*] — I don't fancy my heir. [*Aloud.*] Let's talk about our affairs. I have no children; you are my nearest relative, and my intention, as I wrote you, is to leave you all my property.

Count — And I promise to recognize your benefactions by making a use of them agreeable to God.

Marquis — You can make what use you please of them. But I affixed two conditions to what you call my benefactions; I hope neither of them is repugnant to you?

Count — The first being to add your name to mine, I regard it as a favor.

Marquis — Very good. And the second, to take a wife of my choosing. How does that strike you?

Count — As a filial duty.

Marquis — That is a strong word.

Count — It is but just, sir; for I can truly say that on the receipt of your adorable letter I vowed you all the feelings of a son.

Marquis — Quick as that? All at once? Bang!

Count — To such a degree that I no longer recognized my right to dispose of my hand without your permission, and did not hesitate to break off a very rich marriage which M. de Saint-Agathe had arranged for me in Avignon.

Marquis — Matters had not gone very far, I suppose?

Count — Only the first bann [*of two needed*] had been published.

Marquis — That all! And on what pretext did you break off?

Count — Oh, Gad! it wasn't a family entitled to much consideration — new rich. I have a horror of the middle classes.

Marquis — Hang it! how will you contrive? When I have just fixed on a middle-class wife for you!

Count — Ha, ha! Charming!

Marquis — She is very rich and very handsome, but of very plebeian family.

Count — Is this to be serious?

Marquis [*rising*] — So serious that I make this marriage a *sine qua non* of inheritance from me.

Count — Permit me to say to you, sir, that I do not comprehend what interest —

Marquis — Very simple: she is a girl I saw born, and for whom I cherish an affection like a father's. I want her children to inherit my name, that's all.

Count — At least she is an orphan?

Marquis — Of the mother only.

Count — Well, that is something. Mothers-in-law are the great stumbling-block of misalliances.

Marquis — I ought to let you know, however, that the father has married again, and that the second wife is entirely alive. But she is connected with the highest nobility [*aside:* by her pretensions], and signs "Aglaë Maréchal, *née* De la Vertpillière." [1]

Count — And the father?

Marquis — Former ironmaster, industrial noble,[2] you know the sort; right-thinking [*i.e.*, pro-clerical], deputy of our party.

Count — He is called Maréchal, you say?

Marquis — Maréchal.

Count — Pretty short. Isn't there some territorial name to take, to correct the crudity of the misalliance?

Marquis — I've found something better than that. You would be proud to marry Cathelineau's[3] daughter?

Count — To be sure! but what is the connection —

Marquis — Between a soldier and an orator? Words are swords, too. A week from now your father-in-law will be the Vendéan of the tribune.

Count — Pshaw!

Marquis — I have got our friends to concede that he shall be our spokesman in the session about to open. Mum! it's a secret yet.

[1] Maréchal (Farrier) is a typical middle-class name; De la Vertpillière (Bold Pillager), an invented type of aristocratic origin.

[2] Before the Revolution, nobles could engage in no industry but agriculture and mining.

[3] Vendéan general in the royalist rising against the Revolution in 1793.

Count — Do not begin that way, Marquis! There is no longer a misalliance. The good cause ennobles its champions. And you say the girl is rich?

Marquis — She will bring you enough so you can wait patiently for my inheritance.

Count — May that never reach me! And she is handsome?

Marquis — She is simply the very handsomest person I know, my dear boy. [*Aside.*] I boast of it. [*Aloud.*] You will make her happy, won't you?

Count — I venture to promise that, sir. I comprehend all the duties which marriage imposes; my youth has been one long preparation for the sacred knot, and I can say that I shall present myself unspotted at the altar.

Marquis — Huh!

Count — Ask M. de Saint-Agathe, who knows my most secret actions and my most secret thoughts.

Marquis — My best compliments on it, but your innocence must be like Orestes', my dear boy — it must begin to weigh on you? I hope so, at least.

Count [*dropping his eyes*] — I confess it.

Marquis — Good enough!

Count — Might I venture to ask you if my future wife is brunette?

Marquis — Ah, ha! that interests you!

Count — It is permitted, it is even recommended, to seek in a bride some of those perishable traits which lend one grace the more to virtue. At least that is M. de Saint-Agathe's advice.

Marquis — That's right: it's a long while since we talked about him. By the way, cousin, does M. de Saint-Agathe see about your clothes, too?

Count — Why?

Marquis — Because you have the air of a dispenser of holy water. I can't present you in this deplorable costume: tell my valet to send you my tailor.

Dubois [*entering*] — M. Maréchal is here: must we let him in?

Marquis — I should think so! [*To the* COUNT.] Comes in the nick of time.

Count — Does he know your projects?

Marquis — Not yet, and I shall not open them to him for some days. [*Aside.*] A certain amount of work ought to go on in his mind first.

Scene V.

Enter Maréchal.

Maréchal — By George! you see before you an enraptured man. I came to inquire the news about you, — not without some uneasiness, I will confess to you now, — and I learn you're going out on horseback! Thunder! well, it's your affair, Marquis.

Marquis — Gout is like seasickness: when it's over, it's over. Permit me, my good friend, to introduce Count Hugues d'Outreville, my cousin.

Maréchal — Much honored, my Lord Count. You see before you the oldest friend of our dear Marquis. My grandfather was a farmer of his, and I don't blush for it; my family has won the land, his has lost it,[1] and we meet on the same footing, the one forgetting his superiority of birth, and the other —

Marquis — Of his fortune.

Maréchal — We personify the alliance of the old aristocracy and the new.

Count — You do yourself injustice, sir: you are wholly ours. You are so by the same title as Cathelineau.

Maréchal — Hey?

Count — From the illustrious soldier to the great orator is but a step. Words are swords, too. You are the Vendéan of the tribune.

Maréchal [*aside*] — Who's he hitting at?

Marquis — You will make fuller acquaintance another time, gentlemen. You are worth mutual comprehension. For the moment, my dear Count, don't forget that you have to hold a consultation with my tailor; that is an indispensable preliminary to Parisian life.

Count — Since you permit — [*To* Maréchal.] I hope for the honor of seeing you again, sir.

Marquis [*showing him to the door*] — How does he strike you?

Count — He has a grand look, the look of genius.

Marquis — You're a fine judge. Good-bye.

Scene VI.

Maréchal — Are you sure your cousin's in his right mind? Cathelineau! the Vendéan of the tribune!

[1] *I.e.*, in the Revolution confiscations; a highly tactful allusion.

Marquis — He is a chatterbox, who has spoiled me of the pleasure of breaking a great piece of news to you. But first, my dear Maréchal, are you quite sure of the solidity of your conversion? You don't feel the least liberal virus in your heart any longer?

Maréchal — The suspicion outrages me.

Marquis — Have you completely renounced Voltaire and his pomps?

Maréchal — Don't speak to me about that monster! It's he and his friend Rousseau that have ruined everything. So long as the doctrines of those scoundrels are not dead and buried, there will be nothing sacred, there will be no means of enjoying one's fortune in peace. There must be a religion for the people, Marquis.

Marquis [*aside*] — As he doesn't belong to them any more.

Maréchal — I'll go further: there ought to be the same one for us too. We must frankly return to the religion of our fathers.

Marquis [*aside*] — *His* fathers! — fattened on confiscated estates!

Maréchal — We can't make an end of the Revolution except by destroying the University, that den of free-thinking; that's my opinion.

Marquis — Well, my friend, be of good cheer: operations against the University are going to begin this very session.

Maréchal — You fill me with joy!

Marquis [*putting his hand on* MARÉCHAL'S *shoulder*] — Don't you think that in this memorable campaign the voice of our spokesman will find an echo, and that he may be styled The Vendéan of the Tribune?

Maréchal — What! Marquis —

Marquis — Yes, my friend, it is you we have thought of to play this magnificent part.

Maréchal — Is it possible? But it is immortality you are offering me!

Marquis — Something like that.

Maréchal — From the height of the tribune to dominate the Assembly with voice and gesture, to carry one's thought to the ends of the earth on the wings of Renown! — But, hang it all! do you believe I am fit for a speaker?

Marquis — Why, I was just in the mood of admiring your eloquence.

Maréchal — In private circles, it's well enough. But in public I should never dare.

Marquis — All habit! the best way of learning to swim is to plunge into the water.

Maréchal — Only this is no splashing-around business.

Marquis — We'll tie corks under your arms. Your first speech is a sort of manifesto: we'll give it to you all written, so you'll only have to read it.

Maréchal — Good enough! From the moment nothing is needed but courage and conviction — It won't be known in public that the speech isn't mine?

Marquis — Not unless by indiscretion on your part.

Maréchal — You don't suppose me capable of that, I hope. — And when will the manuscript be put in my hands?

Marquis — In a few days.

Maréchal — I shan't sleep from now till then. I will confess my weakness to you: I love glory.

Marquis — It is the passion of great souls.

Maréchal — Am I quite one of your side now?

Marquis — Quite.

Maréchal — Then let me call you Condorier, as you call me Maréchal. It is a bit of childishness, if you choose —

Marquis — Oh, well, do it. You will give me my title when you have one of your own.

Maréchal — Ah! that's what I understand equality to mean: this is the fine, the true sort.

Dubois [*entering*] — A pretty seedy fellow is here claiming that his Lordship the Marquis has made an appointment with him.

Marquis — In a minute. [*To* MARÉCHAL.] I am sorry to send you away, my dear fellow, but important business has just come up.

Maréchal — Why so many ceremonies among people of our standing? So long, Condorier, so long! [*Goes out.*

Marquis [*to* DUBOIS] — Have him come in now. [*Alone.*] Ass! And to think I've got to make him a baron yet! [*Smiling.*] That man will never know all I've done for him.

SCENE VII.

Dubois [*announcing*] — M. Giboyer!

Marquis — Ah, good morning, M. Giboyer!

Giboyer — My Lord Marquis, I am yours [*i.e.*, your client, not your "sieur"].

Marquis — Mine? Oh! Yes! — Pardon me, I had lost for a moment the key to your picturesque locutions. I heard through your — What do you call Maximilien? your pupil?

Giboyer — The word is too high-flying: a tutor is an article of luxury the lower classes have little use for. Say that I am his uncle on the European plan.

Marquis — Call him your adopted son. — I heard through your adopted son, then, that you were coming to spend a week in Paris, and was seized with a great desire to see you.

Giboyer — You are very good, your Lordship. Your desire only preceded mine. — You may be sure I should not have gone through Paris without knocking at your door — I am not an ingrate.

Marquis — Don't let's talk of that. — Do you know you have not changed since we lost sight of each other? How are you getting on?

Giboyer — It would seem that my father, foreseeing the inclemencies of my existence, must have built me of lime and sand. But yourself — it seems to me you take on years without advancing in age.

Marquis [*at right*] — Oh! as for me, I advanced so fast that I haven't budged an inch for twenty years. [*Seating himself near the table.*] But let's talk about you, my comrade. How have you come out? Have you got a serious position at last?

Giboyer [*seating himself also*] — Yes, extremely serious: one of the hands in the funeral corporation at Lyons.

Marquis — In the funeral corporation?

Giboyer — Daytimes; evenings, ticket-taker at the Celestins' Theatre. I won't spread myself on so philosophic a contrast.

Marquis — Thanks for that. And what is your position in the obsequies?

Giboyer — Arranger. I am the one who tells the guests, with an agreeable smile, "Gentlemen, whenever it may give you pleasure — "

Marquis — Pardon me for astonishment that with your talent, you have not been able to pull your jackstraws out of the heap better.

Giboyer — You talk at your ease about it. The management of jackstraws demands a delicacy of touch incompatible

with the burdens I have always carried on my shoulders: my father first, Maximilien next.

Marquis — Then why the deuce do you amuse yourself rescuing orphans?

Giboyer — What would you have? The Montyon prize [for magnanimity] wouldn't let me sleep.[1] [*Rising.*] Allow me, won't you? I can't stay in one place. — And then later I had a good situation on Vernouillet's paper; I had my foot on the ladder at last: but, thud! the horse dropped dead under me and I fell in the street again, just as payment fell due for the little man's second quarter in college. I had to find a place to-day or to-morrow; I was offered the editorship of the *Radical*, and took it. You know what the "editor" of a paper was then [under the censorship]: its scapegoat, its man of penalties. Funny profession, wasn't it? but it paid well: four thousand francs, boarded and lodged at government charge eight months out of twelve. I saved money. Unluckily '48 came, and the prison career was closed for me.

Marquis — Didn't you offer your services to the Republic?

Giboyer — It refused them.

Marquis — The prude!

Giboyer — I was in despair; not for myself, — I have never found any trouble in earning my salt, —but for the child whose education I should have to break off. It was then that I thought of you and came to find you.

Marquis — Do you remember the time you cursed the cruel boon of education? Who would have said then that one day you would ask me to help you glue this Nessus'-shirt on a poor child's back?

Giboyer — I confess that before sending him to college I had more than one confab with my pillow. My own example wasn't encouraging! But the situations had only an apparent analogy: it needs more than one generation for a family of porters to make a breach into society! All assaults resemble each other: the first assailants remain in the ditch and make a hurdle of their bodies for those who follow. I was the sacrificed generation: it would really have been too stupid to have the sacrifice profit nobody.

Marquis — On my part, I was happy to endow my fatherland with one socialist more. But to come back to you, you had

[1] An allusion to Plutarch's story that Themistocles said "Miltiades' trophy would not let him sleep."

nothing more on your shoulders then; that was the time to draw out your jackstraws.

Giboyer — That's what I told myself; but you shall see my run of bad luck! The press gave me only a starvation diet, thanks to the vast crop of journals; then I struck the idea of writing a series of contemporary biographies.

Marquis — I read some of them: they were very spicy.

Giboyer — Too spicy! Didn't I take my stage part of Chief Justice in dead earnest? Fool! I wrote with the sharp end of my pen: duels, lawsuits, fines — all sorts of earthquake! My editor got scared and suspended publication; and when I wanted to reënter journalism, I found all doors barred by the powerful enmities my little Popedom had created. Nevertheless, Maximilien was about to leave college; I wanted to perfect a *sterling* education for him. There was no time to squirm or make wry faces inside: I put on dirty clothes and jumped in.

Marquis — Jumped in! What do you mean by that?

Giboyer — You don't know, you upper set, any professions but those on the surface of the water; but down at the bottom fifty slimy industries you have no suspicion of nose around in the mud. If I told you I had kept an intelligence office! That isn't particularly nutritious; but I've got the stomach of an ostrich, thank God! I have eaten my finger-ends on good days, dirt on bad ones, and Maximilien is a Litt. D., Ph. D., LL.D.! He has traveled like the scion of a great family! he has honors. — As if all that cost nothing!

Marquis — You take a singular interest in that lad.

Giboyer — He is my one relative, and then one is liable to take up a hobby as he grows old: mine is to make Maximilien what I could not be myself, an honorable and honored man. It pleases me to be a dunghill and fertilize a lily. That fad is as well worth while as a snuff-box collector's.

Marquis — I think so too. But why haven't you acknowledged this son you adore?

Giboyer — What son?

Marquis [*rising*] — Foxy! I know your history as well as you do. You had Maximilien in 1837, by a newspaper folder named Adèle Gérard. Am I rightly informed?

Giboyer — Yes, Mr. President.

Marquis — You lost sight of mother and child nimbly enough up to November, 1845, the date when the poor girl died.

Giboyer — How did you find out —

Marquis — We have our police, my dear fellow. Adèle Gérard wrote you a despairing letter in which she bequeathed you Maximilien; you hurried to her death-bed, and wanted to legitimize the child by a marriage *in extremis*, but the mother gave up the ghost before the sacrament; and then, by a freak I wish you would explain to me, you saddled yourself with the orphan without being willing to acknowledge him. Why was that?

Giboyer — Your Lordship, I have written a book which is the digest of all my experience and all my ideas. I believe it fine and true, I am proud of it, it reconciles me with myself; and for all that, I won't publish it under my name, for fear my name might harm it.

Marquis — That seems prudent, to be sure.

Giboyer — Well, if I don't sign my book, why should you expect me to sign my boy? I congratulate myself every day that death left me no time to fasten on him the ball-and-chain of his parentage.

Marquis — At least he knows you are his father?

Giboyer — What good would it do? If he didn't keep the secret, it would injure him; and if he did keep it I should be deeply wounded. Besides, why put in his mind that cause of timidity or effrontery? What should I gain by it? Don't you believe that at any given moment he would find it harder to forgive me my vices if he had to blush for them as for a taint in himself?

Marquis — Do you know, my brave fellow, you have been worked up to great delicacies of feeling since I saw you?

Giboyer [*dryly*] — You'll be worked up as high when you are a father.

Marquis — Look out, Master Giboyer, you are forgetting yourself!

Giboyer — I am retaliating, that's all, your Lordship. Now let's come to the point; for I don't suppose you have given yourself up to this long investigation out of pure curiosity.

Marquis — And pray what do you suppose?

Giboyer — That before offering me a confidential position, you wanted to make sure if my secret was a sufficient guaranty. Is it sufficient?

Marquis — Yes.

Giboyer — Then talk ahead.

Marquis [*seating himself*] — How much do your two trades bring you in?

Giboyer — Eighteen hundred francs, each washing the other's hands; but don't take that figure for the basis of your offers. You forgot to ask me what I'm in Paris to do. Now, I'm here to make arrangements with an American society that's starting a paper in the United States, and offers me twelve thousand francs to conduct it. Everybody hasn't forgotten me.

Marquis — I am a proof of that. Then you understand English?

Giboyer — I invented the Boyerson method.

Marquis — And you will consent to expatriate yourself?

Giboyer — For certain; unless you offer me the same advantages, in which case I'll give you the preference.

Marquis — But you would make some sacrifice to remain near Maximilien?

Giboyer — That would be a sacrifice at his expense; for if I go out there, at the end of six years I can bring him back three thousand francs yearly income, — that is to say, independence.

Marquis — And if we, my friends and I, charge ourselves with pushing him? I am always interested in him. I have already put him into M. Maréchal's as secretary.

Giboyer — Fine advancement!

Marquis — Hm! ha! There's a good lady there, still fresh, who interests herself in young people and places them extremely well. Maximilien's predecessors all have good situations.

Giboyer — Many thanks! The place I destine for him is not in your ranks, and there's no one but myself that can give it to him.

Marquis — What place? and in what ranks?

Giboyer — My examination is finished, my Lord Marquis.

Marquis [*rising*] — Wait a minute. So it's he that is to sign your book? Splendid! You thus transfuse into his life the quintessence of your own; you leave yourself as a legacy. Bravo, my man! you practice paternity pelican fashion.

Giboyer — You wander from the question, my Lord Marquis: let's come back there, please. This is my ultimatum: I want the same terms as Déodat.

Marquis — And who told you —

Giboyer — You don't expect to put me in your police, do you? That is worked by bigger men than I am. Then what service can I be to you, if not to replace your virtuoso? You thought shamefacedness wouldn't stop me, and you were right: my conscience has no right to play prude. But if you expected

to get me for a crust of bread, you were mistaken. You need me worse than I do you.

Marquis — Ho ! ho ! There's conceit for you.

Giboyer — No, my Lord Marquis. You can perhaps find a literary scamp as capable as I am of emptying a poisoned ink bottle on whoever comes along; but the inconvenience of those auxiliaries is, that you are never sure of keeping them. Now, me you can hold on to. That is what puts me in shape to make conditions.

Marquis — That double-ended reasoning strikes me as unanswerable. Déodat had a thousand francs a month : the committee wanted to effect a reduction under that head, but I will lay stress on your reasons.

Giboyer — Perhaps it wouldn't want to decide except on sample. Suppose I broach a bottle of Déodat for you here this evening?

Marquis — Are you sufficiently master of his style?

Giboyer — Oh, gracious — to make shift at a definition, it consists in *doubling up* the freethinker, *knocking out* the philosopher,[1] and, in a word, preceding the ark with cane and billy.[2] A mixture of Bourdaloue and Turlupin[3] applied to the defense of holy things ; the Dies Iræ on the *mirliton*.[4]

Marquis — Bravo ! Turn those claws against our adversaries, and it will be all right. But tell me, do you feel in condition to write a parliamentary speech?

Giboyer — Yes indeed ! I keep eloquence in stock too; but that comes extra.

Marquis — A bargain. And what pseudonym will you take? for you couldn't be of any service to us under your own name.

Giboyer — That's clear ; and it suits me in every way. The boy won't know it's I ; and besides, I've squeezed out all the juice of the old Giboyer into his glass — let's pass on to another. Besides, I've had enough of that poor devil nothing succeeds with, who has found no means of being a literary man with his talent or an honest man with his virtues. — On with a new skin ! and hurrah for M. Boyergi !

[1] *I.e.*, in France, materialist.

[2] As corporal and policeman.

[3] Famous low comedian.

[4] A squeaking reed pipe, on which vulgar songs and jokes and doggerel verse — like our comic valentines, and known as "mirliton poetry" — are nasally chanted.

Marquis — Your anagram — capital! — I will introduce you to your bankers to-morrow evening. [*Giving him a bank bill.*] This is for your first expenses; so that I shan't know you when you come back!

Giboyer — Leave that to me: I was assistant manager in the Marseilles Theatre.

Marquis — Till to-morrow! [GIBOYER *goes out.*] Ugh! what a day!

Dubois [*entering*] — His Lordship's horse is saddled.

Marquis — All right! [*Taking his hat and gloves.*] Queer scamp! It's the prostitute earning her daughter's dowry.

ACT II.

Scene: A small drawing-room at M. MARÉCHAL'S. *Two doors in flats. Fireplace in rear. Tapestry frame at right.*

SCENE I.

MME. MARÉCHAL, *seated embroidering;* MAXIMILIEN, *seated near her on a cushioned stool, reading to her.*

Maximilien [*reads*] —

"I wept my tears out, there with God alone:
Then longed, ere death enchained me for its own,
To cast my eyes on those dear spots of yore,
So full of mournful charms; and o'er and o'er
Throughout the eve looked on them all once more.
Oh! how few seasons' —"[1]

Mme. Maréchal — I am afraid you are getting tired, M. Maximilien.

Maximilien — No, madame.

Mme. Maréchal — You must think I take a rather unfair advantage of you.

Maximilien — I am too happy that my services as reader can fill the gap of my services as secretary. I have done no work with my two hands since I came to M. Maréchal's.

Mme. Maréchal — You read like an angel.

Maximilien — You are indulgent.

Mme. Maréchal — The way you read verses, one feels that you love them. As for me, I adore them. You write them, perhaps?

[1] From Lamartine's "Jocelyn."

A Summer Evening

From the painting by Emile Avan

Maximilien — I have written some bad enough not to tempt me to begin over again.

Mme. Maréchal — It seems to me that if I had been a man, I should have been a poet — a poet or a soldier. Women are much to be commiserated, so they are! Action is forbidden them, and they are not allowed even to embody their reveries.

Maximilien — Poor women! [*Aside.*] What surprises me is, that you still find any of that. [*Aloud.*] Do you wish me to go on?

Mme. Maréchal — If it doesn't tire you to read. I should never be tired of listening myself. That music is so beautiful!

Maximilien [*reads*] —

> "Oh! how few seasons' flowers and frost and gale
> Had blotted all our traces from the vale!
> How in those paths, familiar to our tread,
> Earth soon forgot us like its silent dead!"

Mme. Maréchal — You were very young when you lost your mother.

Maximilien — I was eight. [*Reading*] —

> "The vegetation, like a sea of green,"

Mme. Maréchal — And you never knew your father?

Maximilien — Never. [*Reads*] —

> "With billowy creepers overspread the scene.
> Bindweed and brier — "

Mme. Maréchal — Poor boy. Alone in the world at eight! How much courage you needed!

Maximilien — None, madame. No one has had an easier life than mine, thanks to the divinely good man who rescued me!

Mme. Maréchal — He is a relative of yours, I believe?

Maximilien — Cousin in the tenth or eleventh degree; but his benefactions have drawn the relationship so much closer that in calling him uncle I wrong him by one grade. He had no children, and, so to speak, adopted me.

Mme. Maréchal — Ah! I understand that, I who have no longer a child! I should be a happy woman if I could find some one to be a mother to.

Maximilien — But it seems to me you are every way led — Your stepdaughter?

Mme. Maréchal — Fernande? Yes — But it is a son I should wish. A son's love must be tenderer. Poor Fernande! I cannot feel harshly toward her: her coldness to me is her fidelity to a tomb.

Maximilien — I believe she lost her mother in the cradle.

Mme. Maréchal — Oh, not at all! She was three, and with us women sensibility is so precocious.

Maximilien — Mlle. Fernande must have worn out hers in the bud.

Mme. Maréchal — Doesn't she seem very expansive to you?

Maximilien — No — no indeed!

Mme. Maréchal — Dear me! she is a little barbarian, who has been reared all alone. Perhaps she is rather proud, but how could it be otherwise in her position as a rich heiress?

Maximilien — Permit me, madame: there is no need of being rich to be proud, and it is a virtue; but it is not pride Mlle. Fernande has, it is superciliousness.

Mme. Maréchal — Have you any complaint for yourself —

Maximilien — Complaint for myself, no, because it is absolutely all the same to me; but frankly, Mlle. Fernande displays an ostentation of indifference to me that is quite useless. I keep myself in my place, and have not the least desire to get myself put back there. She is wasting her frost.

Mme. Maréchal — It may be in your interest; she may be afraid —

Maximilien — Of what?

Mme. Maréchal — You are young, she is handsome —

Maximilien — And she has read novels where the poor secretary falls in love with the baron's daughter? She can reassure herself, I am running no danger. There is a river of ice between us.

Mme. Maréchal — And that river is —

Maximilien — Her dowry! which she would be sure to think me in love with. Rich girls — brrr! The rustling of their gowns seems like the crumpling of bank bills; and I read only one thing in their beautiful eyes, — "The law punishes the counterfeiter."

Mme. Maréchal — I love to see you have those ideas; I have judged you rightly. It must be said, alas! that firmness of sentiment is only in men reared in the school of adversity.

Maximilien — Not at all, madame! that is the only master I have lacked, thanks to my dear protector.

Mme. Maréchal — Do not blush at having known misery, M. Maximilien ; not before me, at least.

Maximilien — Neither before you, madame, nor before anybody. But truly, if I did know it, it was at the age when one doesn't comprehend it, and I no longer remember it. Nothing of my infancy remains to me except a disagreeable impression, that of cold; and yet when I saw the warts on all my little playmates' hands, I should have been ashamed not to have some — [*smiling*] — I did have some.

Mme. Maréchal — It is very becoming to a man to jest about his experiences : light-heartedness is the most virile form of courage.

Maximilien [*aside*] — The good lady sticks there.

Mme. Maréchal — If I had a son, I should wish him smiling in his strength like, like you — and I should beg you to be his friend — his Mentor rather, for he would still be very young.

Maximilien [*aside*] — She must have been married late.

Mme. Maréchal — Love me a little, M. Maximilien.

Maximilien — Certainly, madame —

Scene II.

Fernande *opens the door, and makes a motion to withdraw.*

Mme. Maréchal — Come in, dear, you're not in the way. M. Maximilien is so kind as to do some reading to me. If the beautiful verses don't scare you away, take your work and listen.

Fernande — With pleasure, madame.

[*Brings forth her tapestry frame and installs herself.*

Maximilien [*aside, indicating* Mme. Maréchal] — How she looks at me ! Is it just accident ? — Oh, for shame !

Mme. Maréchal [*going over to* Fernande] — That square is very pretty : take care and not lose it, as you did the last one.

Fernande [*at her work*] — I shall doubtless find it again.

Mme. Maréchal — Some day when nobody needs it, I suppose ?

Fernande — Probably.

Mme. Maréchal — You can't get it out of my head that you lost it so as not to show it to Mme. Mathéus.

Fernande — Why shouldn't I have shown it ?

Mme. Maréchal — Because there were three defects in it, I think.

Fernande — What were you reading ?

Mme. Maréchal — "Jocelyn." Will you resume, M. Maximilien?

Maximilien [*aside*] — She has a queer way of looking at people. [*Reads*] —

> "Bindweed and brier hampered every pace;
> The grass I trod upon knew not my face;
> The lake where fallen leaves had found a grave,
> Now flung them back from all its leaden wave.
> Naught was reflected — "

Mme. Maréchal [*to* FERNANDE] — What are you looking for? I can't listen when people are moving things around me.

Fernande — I can't find my blue ball.

Mme. Maréchal — You lose everything.

Maximilien [*rising*] — Will you permit me, mademoiselle?

Fernande [*dryly*] — Don't disturb yourself, sir: I have it.

Maximilien [*picking up the ball — aside*] — Have you! So have I. [*Puts it on the mantel.*] Miss Stuck-up!

SCENE III.

Enter MARÉCHAL, *manuscript in hand.*

Maréchal — Ah! I was looking for you, M. Gérard. Good morning, Fernande. [*She holds out her forehead to him without quitting her work; he kisses her.*] Here's your stent, my young friend.

Maximilien — All the better, sir. I was complaining of my uselessness.

Maréchal — From now on you won't lie idle any more, so be easy.

Fernande — What is it?

Maréchal — What is it? Haven't you noticed for three days that I had a gloomy and preoccupied air?

Fernande — No.

Maréchal — That surprises me! I thought I had — and one might have had it for less. I've just written a speech that will be a thunderbolt.

Fernande [*rising and going to her father*] — A speech? You are going to speak?

Maréchal — I've got to.

Fernande — Ah, father, speech is silver, but silence is golden.

Maréchal — There are circumstances, my girl, there are positions, when silence is a defection, and not to speak is complicity. Isn't that so, Aglaë?

Mme. Maréchal — Of course. [*To* FERNANDE.] Your father owes pledges to his party, his distinguished friendships, and, I say it boldly, to his alliance with a De la Vertpillière.

Fernande — Is it you, madame, who are urging him on?

Mme. Maréchal — Are you vexed at seeing him emerge from his obscurity?

Fernande — Alas! His tranquil life has not kept my vanity on the rack; his name without distinction has been enough for me, me, who loved him. [*To* MARÉCHAL.] What ambition is seizing you? I shall be worried to death the day you mount that dreadful tribune.

Maréchal — It isn't ambition, girlie, it's duty! Don't try to shake me: it will be in vain. Honor speaks and it must be heard. [FERNANDE *returns to her tapestry.*] My dear Gérard, do me the kindness of copying over my scrawls in your handsomer hand, for I can't make out my meaning there myself.

Fernande — Oh, you'll read it?

Maximilien — I will set about the work at once.

Maréchal — Run over it a little first, to see if you can decipher it. [*To* FERNANDE.] Yes, I shall read it: that doesn't make you so uneasy, hey? distrustful little thing! I shall read my first speech: as for the second, we'll see. [*Tapping her playfully on the cheek.*] So we take our father for an old duffer, do we?

[FERNANDE *kisses his hand;* MAXIMILIEN *sits in a corner and runs over the manuscript.*]

Servant [*announces*] — Her Ladyship the Baroness Pfeffers!

SCENE IV.

Enter the BARONESS, *with a piece of tapestry rolled up in her muff.*

Mme. Maréchal — Ah, Baroness!

Baroness — This is not your day, madame, but I did not wish to pass your door without knocking, though I still hope to see you enter mine to-morrow evening.

Maréchal — We'll go, if we have to go on our heads!

Baroness — Are you coming on well, Mr. Orator?

Maréchal — Ready for the combat, madame.

Baroness — Ho for the triumph! [*To* Mme. MARÉCHAL.] I have also a little service to ask of you, madame.

Mme. Maréchal — I regret that it should be little.

Baroness — We are both patronesses of the Chinese Children's Mission; I have sold all my tickets and am asked for more. Could you let me have a dozen of yours?

Maréchal — They don't fight so much over hers as yours, dear Baroness.

Mme. Maréchal [*aside*] — Brute! [*Aloud.*] I will see what I have left.

Baroness — Is it going to put you out? You can send them to me.

Mme. Maréchal — No, I prefer to give them to you at once, it is safer: they might be stolen.

Maréchal [*low*] — You've got them all yet.

Mme. Maréchal [*same*] — You never say anything without putting your foot in it. [*Goes out.*

Baroness [*approaching* FERNANDE'S *frame*] — Ah, you are one of the Altar Society, too, mademoiselle?

Fernande — No, madame.

Baroness — What? isn't what you are making there a square for a kneeling rug?

Fernande — It is anything you like.

Baroness — But it's the regulation pattern — look.

[*Unrolls the tapestry she has in her muff.*

Fernande [*aside*] — Oh dear!

Maréchal — Is that your work? Oh, charming!

Fernande — It is very pretty. That must have cost — a great deal of time, didn't it?

Baroness — Oh my, no!

Mme. Maréchal [*returning*] — I've only nine left: here they are.

Maréchal [*showing her the* BARONESS' *tapestry*] — Look at this, dear.

Mme. Maréchal [*to* FERNANDE] — Oh, you found it again?

Maréchal — What are you saying?

Mme. Maréchal — Why, yes indeed, that's the square Fernande thought she had lost.

Maréchal — You're dreaming, my dear.

Mme. Maréchal — It is quite recognizable — here are the three poor spots. Isn't it, Fernande?

Fernande — I must say it is true.

Baroness [*aside*] — Ow!

Maximilien [*aside*] — Good!

Maréchal [*aside*] — Thunder! what a slip-up that was!

Baroness [*threatening* FERNANDE *with her finger*] — Ah, little mischief, you recognized your own work, and you were laughing at me, asking me if it had cost much time!

Fernande — I wished to make you confess that your good works left you no time for knitting-work.

Maréchal [*aside*] — That child has wit when it's needed.

Mme. Maréchal — Let me into the secret, please.

Baroness — What society woman makes her tapestry herself and wears only her own hair? Those are little deceits so general and so well understood, that when our switch comes off before our friends we put it on again with a laugh [*rolls up her square*], and that's what I'm doing.

Maréchal [*aside*] — Charming! adorable! No one has more grace!

Baroness — What surprises me in this accident is not that my tapestry shouldn't be my work, for I bought it: it's that it should be yours, mademoiselle.

Maréchal — Yes, that's a fact: how could it be sold to you?

Mme. Maréchal [*to* FERNANDE] — I have always suspected the honesty of your chambermaid.

Fernande — Poor Jeannette! she is incapable —

Mme. Maréchal — It isn't the first time your little pieces of work have got lost: probably she is making merchandise of them.

Baroness — And that the poor old woman we buy them of is a "fence." One more fraud on charity!

Maréchal — This is very serious. Have Jeannette come here till I question her.

Fernande — No, father: I will explain the great mystery to you later.

Mme. Maréchal — Why not at once?

Maréchal — Have Jeannette come here.

Fernande [*very red*] — Well! since I am compelled, it was I that gave those trifles to old Ma'am Hardouin.

Maximilien [*aside*] — Come, come!

Mme. Maréchal — It isn't worth blushing for as you are doing.

Baroness — Besides, madame, why force her to reveal her beautiful soul?

Fernande — These things are ridiculous when they are not secret.

Mme. Maréchal — This is romantic charity.

Maréchal — Haven't you enough money for charity?

Fernande [*impatiently, with tears in her eyes*] — It isn't all the poor that will take charity. That old woman is proud; she is used to living by her needle, her eyesight is failing, and I come to the aid of her eyes, that's all. There is nothing romantic about it, and truly I don't understand why I should be tormented for so little a thing.

Maréchal — Come, quiet down: there's no great harm done.

Maximilien [*in a low voice*] — I believe it.

Maréchal [*to* MAXIMILIEN] — Do you like it?

Maximilien — I can read it perfectly; I am going to begin work on it. [*Goes out.*

Baroness — Is that your secretary? He is distinguished looking. Good-by, dear madame; I leave you in great mortification over the little annoyance I have been the cause of for Mlle. Fernande. I am going to carry my brand of discord to St. Thomas Aquinas'; and rest easy, mademoiselle, I will not reveal your part in the collaboration.

Servant [*announces*] — His Lordship the Count d'Outreville!

SCENE V.

Enter the COUNT; BARONESS *leaning against the fireplace.*

Maréchal — Good morning, my Lord Count.

Count [*without seeing the* BARONESS] — How are the ladies? Their faces answer for them. My cousin made an appointment for me here —

Maréchal — Condorier?

Count — But I see that in my eagerness I have anticipated the time.

Mme. Maréchal — You are too gracious, Lord Count.

Baroness — Good-bye, dear madame.

Count — Oh, pardon, Baroness! I did not perceive you.

Baroness — I thought you did not recognize me.

Count [*approaching the fireplace*] — Could you believe that after having seen you once —

Baroness — I can believe it all the more, because at St. Thomas Aquinas' you were not twenty chairs from me and didn't bow to me.

Count — If I could have supposed you would do me the honor to recognize me —

Baroness — Oh ! the honors I can do you hardly touch you. I have done you that of inviting you to my house, and you haven't appeared there. Do I frighten you ?

Count — Oh no !

Baroness — Well ! try to earn your pardon.

Servant [*announces*] — His Lordship the Marquis d'Auberive !

Scene VI.

Enter the Marquis.

Baroness [*to the* Marquis] — I am saved by a scratch : I was going to heap reproaches on you, Marquis.

Marquis — And why so, lovely being ?

Baroness — Your cousin will tell you. To-morrow, will you not, dear madame ? and you too, dear young lady. [*Goes out.*

Count [*aside*] — She recognized me !

Maréchal — What grace ! what ease ! She is in her own house everywhere.

Fernande — Yes, it is we who seemed to be making the call.

Marquis — What I admire in her above all is tact. She understood that I have to talk serious business to you, and raised the siege. My dear Fernande, go and see if she has gone for good.

Fernande — " And don't come back to tell us."

Marquis [*smiling*] — There isn't any need of it, really.

Scene VII.

Mme. Maréchal — Am I in the way too ?

Marquis — On the contrary, I count on you to help plead my cause. But let's sit down. [*They seat themselves.*] Madame, you have never shared our friend Maréchal's repugnance to marrying Fernande to a gentleman.

Mme. Maréchal — I have not the same motives as he to dread an aristocratic alliance : for me it is not quitting my sphere, it is reëntering it.

Maréchal — Heavens, my good friend ! that repugnance you speak of wasn't an actual repugnance, it was rather — what shall I say ? a possibly exaggerated modesty.

Marquis — I should have understood that up to a certain point, a week ago : but to-day there is not a gentleman who

does not consider your alliance an honor to him; and the proof is that I have come to ask the hand of my ward for the Count d'Outreville, here present, the sole heir of my property and my name.

Maréchal — Is it possible? What, my Lord Marquis! you would consent —

Mme. Maréchal [*low to her husband*] — Dignity, please! [*Aloud.*] We are deeply touched, Marquis, by the request you choose to make of us, but we ought before all to consult our dear Fernande's heart.

Maréchal — Ah, that's true.

Marquis — Nothing more just, madame; but could it not be consulted at once? Would you see any inconvenience in my cousin's pleading his own cause with Fernande?

Maréchal — None at all, Marquis, none at all.

Mme. Maréchal [*low*] — You throw yourself at his head.

Marquis — And you, madame?

Mme. Maréchal — I think all this is very irregular.

Marquis — I know it; but cannot etiquette have a little compassion on a young man's impatience? [*Low, to the* COUNT.] Say something yourself!

Count [*coldly*] — I beg you, madame.

Mme. Maréchal — As everybody wishes it —

Maréchal — That's it! Send for Fernande, my dear. [*Low.*] And prepare her a little.

Mme. Maréchal — Once more, this is all very quick work. Well! I yield. [*Goes out.*

SCENE VIII.

Maréchal — Now my wife's out of the way, let me tell you without ceremony, my dear Marquis, how happy and proud I am of your alliance!

Count — It is for me alone, sir, to congratulate myself on it.

Maréchal — I hadn't intended to give but eight hundred thousand francs to my daughter, but now I'll give her a round million.

Count — Pray, sir, do not let us talk of these meannesses.

Marquis — On the contrary, just let's talk of them! My cousin has at present only twelve thousand francs income, but I have seventy I shall leave him — as late as possible.

Maréchal — Thunder! I've got a hundred more to offer him the day of my funeral.

Marquis — My grand — your grandchildren, I meant to say — will be in easy circumstances.

Maréchal — Why take it back, my dear Condorier? Say *our* grandchildren! They'll bear your name, won't they? Why, begad, Marquis! here we are relations — allied, anyway — through the women.

Marquis [*thoughtlessly*] — We were already — er — by our opinions.

Maréchal — But what are they amusing themselves at, out there? I'll bet Mme. Maréchal's making us wait just for dignity.

Marquis — Go and hunt them up: I will rejoin you.

Maréchal — I'm going to. [*Looking back at the* COUNT *from the doorway.*] How handsome he is!

SCENE IX.

Marquis — See here, my dear fellow, you're going to the altar like a whipped dog. *I* don't want you to be unhappy! If your bride displeases you, you ought to say so.

Count — It isn't that she displeases me, but —

Marquis — Say it, say it, don't incommode yourself! I'm in no straits for an heir. *Uno avulso non deficit alter*,[1] to speak your own tongue. I'll fall back on another branch — that of Valtravers. I am on bad terms with them; but reconciliation will be easy — *Aureus*, by Gad![2]

Count — Cousin, in heaven's name, do not become excited!

Marquis — I am not becoming excited, sir, I am putting you at your ease. It is clear this marriage doesn't inspire you with enthusiasm.

Count — Why, yes, cousin, it inspires me with it.

Marquis — Oh, you don't find Fernande well enough made. Then do as well for yourself!

Count — But suppose I should have the ill fortune to displease her, in spite of my good will!

Marquis — I should be sorry for you; but I'll call up a Valtravers. You are prejudiced.

Count — Good gracious, what a situation!

[FERNANDE *appears at the door, left.*

Marquis [*low*] — Here she is! I'll leave you.

[1] Virgil, misquoted: "One overturned, another will be lacking."

[2] Same quotation.

Count [*same*] — I don't know how to begin.

Marquis [*same*] — Very difficult, isn't it! "Mademoiselle, I have the consent of your parents, but I do not wish to hold you except of your own will." [*To* FERNANDE.] You expected to find your stepmother here, my child; but she has deserted you as well as your father, and I'm going to ask them the reason. [*Goes out.*

SCENE X.

Count [*aside*] — Her head is handsome; but what a difference from the divine Pfeffers! And if she refuses me, I am ruined! [*Aloud.*] Mademoiselle, have you been told with what object —

Fernande — Yes, sir.

Count — I have the consent of your parents, but I do not wish to hold you except of your own will. That, I believe, is a sentiment of which you cannot disapprove.

Fernande — It is at once delicate and prudent; for I am not one of those who are married without consulting them. Neither of us knows each other, sir: to gain the knowledge, would you wish we should talk with entire frankness?

Count — Most willingly, mademoiselle: frankness is my principal quality.

Fernande — All the better! That is what I esteem above everything. Well, why do you wish to marry me?

Count — Er — why — because I could not see you without —

Fernande — Excuse me! you are forgetting our agreement already. We have seen each other three times, we have exchanged three words, and I have not the vanity to believe that that was enough to turn your head.

Count — You do not render yourself justice, mademoiselle.

Fernande — How hard it is for men to be sincere! I will add, to put you at your ease, that if you would marry me for love, I should think myself bound in honesty to refuse you, for there would be an inequality of sentiments between us which would make you unhappy, were there ever so little of delicacy in your soul.

Count — Then — ah — if with me there is not precisely what in the language of the world is called love, believe me that there are at least all the sentiments which consort owes to consort.

Fernande — All well and good! but those sentiments are not vehement enough to urge a gentleman into a misalliance. You must, then, have some special motive. I do not doubt its being a perfectly honorable one, and if I insist on knowing it, it is solely not to leave the shadow of an afterthought on the esteem I wish to give my husband. You hesitate to answer?

Count — No, mademoiselle. I am marrying you out of deference to the desires of my cousin — a deference which is very sweet, I assure you.

Fernande — I might have guessed it: from the moment he did not oppose this misalliance, it is because he ordered it!

Count — He has an affection for you —

Fernande — He is alone in the world; I am his ward, and his heart attaches itself to that tie, weak as it may be. Go, my Lord, go and tell him that what he wishes shall be done.

Count — What gratitude, mademoiselle — !

Fernande — You owe me none, sir: I accept an honorable name, honorably offered — and I promise to bear it worthily.

Count — And I, on my side, assure you that in spite — But you are right: I will go and rejoice my cousin with this happy news. [*Goes out.*

Fernande [*alone; after a silence*] — As well he as any one else, after all! To get out of this house is the important thing. Poor father!

Scene XI.

Enter Maximilien, *manuscript in hand.*

Maximilien — Excuse me, mademoiselle: I expected to find your father here.

Fernande [*going over and seating herself at her work*] — I believe he is in the large drawing-room; but I doubt if you can speak with him — he has business on hand.

Maximilien [*aside*] — Hmph! so much the worse, I'll leave the word blank. Strange girl! [*Puts his manuscript on the mantel, takes the ball of worsted, and going over to* Fernande *says:*] Here is your blue ball, mademoiselle. What have I done to you? Why do you treat me so harshly? So long as I took you for a society commonplace, I thought myself far above your scorn and hardly bothered myself about it; but the girl who lends her eyes to old Ma'am Hardouin does not scorn any one's poverty, and I have come to ask you in all honesty what I have failed of your esteem in.

Fernande [*without raising her eyes from her work*] — I am sorry, sir, that my way of carrying myself hurts your feelings : it is the same with you as with your predecessors, and it has not injured their careers.

Maximilien — Is that all the answer you have to make me?

Fernande — Nothing else.

Maximilien — Really, mademoiselle, if I were the lowest of men, you would not treat me any differently.

Fernande [*rising*] — Good-bye, sir.

Maximilien [*placing himself between her and the door*] — No, mademoiselle, no ! You shall not leave me so. I read an immense scorn in your eyes. The explanation I demand from you, I insist on now.

Fernande [*haughtily*] — You know very well that I cannot give it to you.

Maximilien — I swear to you that I know nothing, that I understand nothing, except that I am arraigned in my honor. Answer me, I beg of you ! Who has been slandering me? What am I accused of?

Fernande — Nothing, sir; stop there, I beg.

Maximilien — Come, mademoiselle, you are kind, you give alms with your heart : have pity on my distress. It concerns everything I hold most dear.

Fernande — What do you hope from this comedy? Do you expect to make me say what I blush to know? Let me pass.

Maximilien — But you say not a word to me that is not a knife stroke ! I implore you on my knees — !

Fernande — Take care of —

Maximilien — Of what?

Fernande — Of your career ! [*Passes on.*

Maximilien — Ah ! I understand ! [*Fernande stops in the doorway.*] There have been wretches here — and you judge me from them ! My justification will not wait long, and it will be for you rather than me to droop the eyes over your suspicion. Go on, I commiserate you — I commiserate you more than you outrage me, poor girl who have lost the holy ignorance of evil.

Scene XII.

Enter Maréchal *and the* Marquis.

Maréchal — Well, M. Gérard, how does your work come on?

Maximilien — I was begging mademoiselle to charge herself with giving you, sir, a communication which costs me something: my resignation.

Maréchal — What! your resignation? But I won't accept it. Going to leave me just the minute I need you!

Marquis — This isn't the right thing, my dear fellow.

Maximilien — I have not explained myself well, sir. I am not the man to requite your kindness by giving you embarrassment. I wished only to ask you to look up a successor to me. I will stay till you have found one.

Maréchal — It's most annoying! I've got used to you, you see. I hate new faces.

Marquis — What maggot has got into your head?

Maréchal — Has somebody offered you a better place?

Maximilien — No sir: if I leave your service, it is to reënter my own. I am not used to dependence on anything but my work, and I feel incapable of any other subjection.

Maréchal — Your work! Lord! you owned up that before you came to me you did copying for publishers, thirty francs a sheet, small hand.

Maximilien — Small hand, yes sir.

Maréchal — And you want to begin that starvation work over again?

Fernande [*aside*] — I have taken away his bread!

Maréchal — Why, the thing is absurd!

Maximilien — Call to mind the fable of the Wolf and the Dog.

Maréchal — Have you been treated like a dog here? Don't you get enough consideration?

Maximilien — On the contrary, sir; but by a streak in my character I am not master of, all the care that is taken to make me forget the inferiority of my position serves only to recall it to me. It is unjust and ridiculous, I know. I blame nobody but myself, but I suffer, and I am going away.

[FERNANDE *goes out at left.*

Marquis [*aside*] — There's something back of this.

Maréchal — You're too high and mighty; what do you want me to tell you! I can't hold you back by main strength.

Marquis [*low, to* MARÉCHAL] — Let me talk to him.

Maréchal — Talk away. [*Goes out at right.*

Scene XIII.

Marquis — See here, my dear fellow, what's going on?

Maximilien — You ought to have warned me, my Lord, that I was coming in here to be Mme. Maréchal's cosset.

Marquis — Oh, that's where the shoe pinches, eh? You've struck the good woman's fancy? Reassure yourself: she won't make you leave your cloak behind. She is a romantic creature, but quite Platonic. Her hero isn't forced to take part in the romance: she pays all the expenses. She persuades herself that she is beloved, she gives herself up to terrible combats, and at the end of the programme she triumphs over her imaginary danger by banishing the seducer into a good position. You see you can stay.

Maximilien — My Lord Marquis, that is an extenuating circumstance for Mme. Maréchal, but not for the scamp who trades on the absurdities of that lady. If I should meet one of my predecessors, I wouldn't bow to him, even after this explanation.

Marquis — You are proud.

Maximilien — Do you blame me?

Marquis — No, certainly not.

Maximilien — In consenting to remain some days yet in this intolerable position, I believe I render all that is due to you, my Lord, and to M. Maréchal; don't ask any more of me.

Marquis — I have no reply to make.

Maximilien — I will return to the library, which I shall not leave again till the arrival of my successor. [*Goes out.*

Marquis — That little bastard deserves to be a gentleman. [*Goes out.*

ACT III.

Scene: Maréchal's *library. Solitary door at rear. On the left of the audience, a small desk with pigeon-holes, back to the characters. A little to the right of the center, a small sofa and a center-table.*

Scene I.

Maréchal, *alone, standing in the center behind the sofa, as if at the tribune; on the table beside him is a glass of water; he takes a swallow, and declaims:* —

"And, gentlemen, be perfectly assured of it, the only solid basis in the political order, as in the moral order, is Faith! What should be taught the people is not the rights of man, it is the rights of God; for dangerous truths are no truths. The divine institution of authority — that is the first and last word of primary instruction!" [*Comes down in front, manuscript in hand.*] There! I know my first part without a hitch. It was no fool of a job: I've got a memory that kicks like all high-spirited things. Memory's a subordinate faculty, anyhow. I'll speak it, for sure. It's superb, my speech is. I'd like to know who did it, so's to order the next one. I don't know whether it'll produce the same effect on the Chamber as it did on me; but it seems to me unanswerable — it strengthens me in my convictions, it uplifts me. Oh, what a fine thing eloquence is! I was born to be an orator: I've got the voice and the action, the things that can't be bought; the rest [*glancing at the manuscript*] can be bought. That little animal of a Gérard hasn't finished his breakfast. I'd like to have the next part of my speech. I've none too much time to learn it from now till to-morrow. Don't eat at my table any more, if that humiliates you, my good lad; but don't steal an hour from me after every meal — my time is precious. His great love of independence is needing a smoke for digestion, that's all. There's no more society possible with a cigar. Everything goes together: bad manners beget bad morals; and look right around you, gentlemen, you will recognize that the road of revolutions is strewn with the wreckage of social proprieties. See there! a'n't I improvising, now?

Scene II.

Enter Maximilien.

Maréchal — Well, young man, do you get a better breakfast at the restaurant than at my house? You can make a longer breakfast there anyhow, and no fault found.

Maximilien — I have only a few pages more of your speech to copy, sir; I shall have it all finished in an hour.

Maréchal — Well, give me what there is done of it anyway, so I can be studying it.

Maximilien [*taking the sheets from the desk drawer*] — Here it is, sir. I have taken the liberty of restoring a few words

necessary to the grammatical construction, which had evidently remained on the end of your pen.

Maréchal — I scribble so rapidly.

Maximilien — Others were illegible; those I have replaced according to the sense of the context: as *prolegomena*, *synthetic*, *logomachy*.

Maréchal — I am pleased to see that the secrets of the language are familiar to you.

Maximilien — Those there are no secrets to anybody.

Maréchal — To anybody! You are a man of merit, my dear Gérard. Between us two, how does my speech here strike you?

Maximilien — It troubles me a great deal, sir; it irritates me.

Maréchal — Irritates you?

Maximilien — Like all reasonings you find nothing to answer to, and yet an inward sentiment protests against.

Maréchal — You admit there's nothing to answer? That's enough for me.

Maximilien — The second part especially is of great force.

Maréchal — Ah! yes.

Maximilien — I confess I need to collect all my ideas to defend them from so vigorous an attack.

Maréchal — You delight me. I believe I shall make a big sensation. I'm going to try and learn it by heart, for a speech read is always cold. You may bring the end to my room, if you please; and if you will, we'll have a general rehearsal, where you can make pretended interruptions, to get my memory used to the din of [French] assemblies.

Maximilien — At your orders. [MARÉCHAL *goes out.*

SCENE III.

Maximilien [*alone*] — It's true I am troubled and irritated. Troubled — that's very simple: I feel all the foundations of my belief tottering under me. But irritated — against whom? Against the truth? That's too silly! and it's so, for all that! My reason takes a road I refuse to follow it on. It seems to me it's going over to the enemy. — The enemy! Do I hate anybody? No; not even that girl. What a singular product of civilization — that pure forehead, those limpid eyes, and that faded soul! To think I was on the point of taking her for an angel with her old Ma'am Hardouin! Ah, mademoiselle, you cosset poverty that gets down on its knees and snivels; that

that keeps silence and stands on its feet you insult! Your poor are your charity dolls! Decidedly I hate her.

Scene IV.

Enter Mme. Maréchal, *a book in her hand.*

Maximilien [*aside*] — Now for the other one!

Mme. Maréchal — I am bringing back "Jocelyn." [Maximilien *bows, sits down at the desk and begins to write.* Mme. Maréchal *replaces the book on the shelf. A silence.*] We haven't seen you since yesterday, M. Maximilien. It is through my husband that I learn you are going to leave us.

Maximilien — Yes, madame.

Mme. Maréchal — Is the true motive of your resolution the one you gave M. Maréchal?

Maximilien — Of course.

Mme. Maréchal — I am relieved! I was afraid my step-daughter had somehow hurt your feelings.

Maximilien — No, madame.

Mme. Maréchal — Then you are not leaving us angry? You will not forget entirely that this house has been yours for some days? The secretary leaves us, but the friend will return?

Maximilien — Certainly, madame.

Mme. Maréchal — I need that promise, for you have inspired me with a true friendship, M. Maximilien.

Maximilien — You are exceedingly good, madame.

Mme. Maréchal — It is not a conventional protestation, you may be sure. I trust you will some day put me to the proof.

Maximilien — Never!

Mme. Maréchal — Why never? Does your pride refuse to owe something to an almost maternal affection?

Maximilien — Ah, madame, let that impossible maternity alone.

Mme. Maréchal [*dropping her eyes*] — Mayn't I be at least your elder sister?

Maximilien — No, madame, no more my sister than my mother.

Mme. Maréchal [*in a faint voice*] — And why not?

Maximilien — Nothing.

[*A silence.*]

Mme. Maréchal — Yes, you are right: everything separates us. I was foolish to ask you to return: you must not see me

again. I understand your departure just now. You are an honest man, and I thank you.

Maximilien [*aside*] — There's nothing to do it for.

Scene V.

Enter Fernande.

Maximilien [*aside*] — Again! [*Starts to write.*

Fernande [*to* Mme. Maréchal] — I have come to look for a book.

Mme. Maréchal — What book?

Fernande — I don't know in the least. I have nothing to do, and I want something to read. Advise me, M. Maximilien — something that will interest me.

[Maximilien *rises and goes to the book shelves.*

Fernande [*aside*] — I hoped I should find him alone.

[Maximilien *hands her a book with a bow, and returns to desk.*]

Fernande [*opening the book*] — "Dictionary of the Peerage." Is that an epigram? I do not deserve it. I have no more claims to rank than you. [*Giving the book to* Mme. Maréchal.] Here, madame.

Mme. Maréchal — If I have claims, my dear, they are well founded.

Fernande — I have no doubt of it. Give me something else, M. Maximilien — what you would give your sister.

Maximilien [*aside*] — She too! Too many relatives.

Mme. Maréchal [*aside*] — How she makes eyes at him!

A Servant [*entering*] — His Lordship the Count d'Outreville wishes to know if the ladies can be seen.

Maximilien [*aside*] — I'm going to be left in peace.

[*Sits down at his desk again.*

Fernande — Will you go and receive him, madame?

Mme. Maréchal — He asks to see both of us.

Fernande — I am indisposed, and you must excuse me.

Mme. Maréchal [*aside*] — Easy to see she wants to stay alone with Maximilien. [*To the* Servant.] Show the Count in. [Servant *goes out.*

Scene VI.

Enter the Count.

Count — Pardon me, ladies, for presenting myself at so early an hour. This letter of M. d'Auberive will explain to you the irregularity of my conduct.

Maximilien [*aside*] — The young Count has a frank appearance — a counterfeit franc.

Mme. Maréchal [*reading the letter*] — Your cousin asks me, Count, to guide you in purchasing the wedding gift.[1]

Count — He is occupying himself with the publication of the banns.

Fernande — Already?

Count — He does not wish to leave you time for reflection, mademoiselle.

Fernande — That is not complimentary to you, sir.

Count — It does justice to my slight deserts.

Maximilien [*aside*] — Is she going to marry that parchment title? She is all of a piece.

Mme. Maréchal — M. d'Auberive makes marriages as Bonaparte made war. I will put on my hat and shawl, and then I am with you. [*Aside.*] I am not sorry to have Maximilien learn the news. [*Goes out.*

Scene VII.

Maximilien [*aside*] — Am I to assist at their idyls like a King Charles?

Count — Permit me, mademoiselle, to profit by these too short moments — [Maximilien *coughs.*] We are not alone!

Fernande — My father's secretary, M. Gérard.

Count — Delighted to make his acquaintance: kindly introduce me.

Fernande [*to* Maximilien] — M. Maximilien, I make you acquainted with Count d'Outreville, my fiancé.

Count [*aside*] — Is she introducing *me?*

Maximilien — Sir —

Count — Charmed, sir. [*Aside.*] I don't like him. [*A silence.* Count, *to* Fernande.] I was told that M. Maréchal was not seeing any one. Is he indisposed?

[1] *Corbeille*, the bridegroom's gift on marriage: by custom, about a tenth of the bride's dowry.

Fernande — He has shut himself up to work: hasn't he, M. Maximilien?

Maximilien [*at his desk*] — Yes, mademoiselle. [*Silence.*

Count — I enjoyed a delicious morning service last Sunday. I heard at the Madeleine a musical mass executed by the vocalists of our principal theaters. The organ was played by an excellent virtuoso.

Fernande — Do you love music?

Count — Oh, certainly. I noted also with pleasure that the church was heated.

Fernande — Oh, our piety loves its comforts.

Count — And how correct it is to give them to it! And the church was full — in Paris! It is a consoling spectacle, this recrudescence of public devotion.

Fernande — What is your opinion, M. Maximilien?

Maximilien — I am glad the gentleman is consoled. As for me, I have no need of consolation: I am a philosopher.

Count — Do you mean to say you are not a Christian?

Maximilien — I beg your pardon, sir, I am! To that degree that I practice forgiveness of injuries.

Fernande — Forgiveness or disdain?

Maximilien — Both.

Fernande — Without making any difference between repentance and hardening of heart?

Maximilien — I don't look so close as that.

Fernande — You are unjust, sir.

Maximilien — Possibly, mademoiselle; you have known about all those things longer than I.

Fernande [*rising, with a troubled air*] — My stepmother is very slow: I will go and hurry her up a little. [*Goes out.*

Scene VIII.

Count [*aside*] — One would say there was some pique between them. [*Aloud.*] Have you been in this house long, sir?

Maximilien — No sir, and I am not going to stay here.

Count — I regret it, sir, as I am to enter it myself.

Maximilien — Very kind, I'm sure.

Count — I trust it is not I who am driving you away?

Maximilien — How should it be you?

Count — Oh, you know: it explains itself when one goes out at the moment another enters.

Maximilien — Pardon me, sir, I have just finished a piece of work M. Maréchal is waiting for — and that I must take to him. [*Bows and goes out.*

Scene IX.

Count [*alone*] — Hm! Has my marriage interrupted a little romance? I have more suspicions than I show. This person who does not need to be consoled, who practices forgiveness of injuries, and who quits his place as soon as Mlle. Fernande marries — She went out as red as a cherry, over a word — probably with a double meaning. Hm! I do not like this at all! I'll speak about it to the Marquis.

Scene X.

A Servant *announces the* Baroness, *who enters.*

Count [*aside*] — Heavens! the Baroness!

Baroness — You, Count? and alone? Why did they let me in here?

Count — The ladies were here a moment ago, and are to return.

Baroness — No harm, then. As to M. Maréchal, he is invisible.

Count — He is at work, they tell me.

Baroness — Good gracious, at what?

Count — Probably his speech.

Baroness — I thought that was done. That is just the subject I am here about. I hope Mme. Maréchal will help me break into the guard-house, which is robbing mortals of the sight of her spouse.

Count — I have no doubt of it.

Baroness — Neither have I. [*Aside.*] He is of an innocence that is — priceless. [*Aloud, seating herself.*] This is three times in a very few days that heaven has thrown you in my path: does it not seem like a providential design to make us acquainted?

Count [*standing*] — One would say so.

Baroness — Perhaps some good fortune for our cause may result from our meeting. I have a sort of presentiment of it: and you —?

Count — It would be glorious indeed for me, madame.

Baroness — You bear on your forehead the sign of the elect.

Count — You are too kind.

Baroness — Heaven gladly employs pure hands. Celibacy is a great virtue, you know.

Count — Alas! I am to marry.

Baroness — You to marry?

Count — Yes, madame: I marry Mlle. Fernande.

Baroness — Salvation is to be found in marriage also. My compliments, Count: your bride is charming, and fully justifies the violence of your passion.

Count — The violence?

Baroness — Dear me! it is only a violent passion that can excuse —

Count — But is not M. Maréchal's political part a title of nobility? I do not think an alliance with our champion is derogatory to me.

Baroness [*aside*] — Aha, M. d'Auberive! This is a good thing to know. [*Aloud.*] Then it is an arranged marriage you are making?

Count — Yes, madame: my cousin desires it very much.

Baroness — Quite proper. Anyway, I do not know why I should meddle in it, and you must find me very indiscreet. Attribute it only to a sympathy perhaps inconsiderate; but when I saw you, it seemed to me it was a friend who was coming to me. [*Taking his hand.*] Do I deceive myself?

Count — Oh, madame! [*Puts her hand to his lips.*

Baroness [*withdrawing her hand with a smile*] — No — it is not a commonplace gallantry I ask from you — this little feminine hand is worthy of being pressed in a masculine fashion, and you will render it that justice some day. Do you see my bracelet?

Count — Yours? — Yes —

Baroness [*taking it off and giving it to him*] — It is of rather curious workmanship —

Count — Very curious.

Baroness — Especially the locket. It contains my husband's hair.

Count — What! these white hairs?

Baroness — Oh, my life has been austere, Count. At seventeen, I married an old man to fulfill the last wishes of my benefactress.

Count — Your benefactress?

Baroness — An orphan in the cradle, without fortune, I was rescued by a distant relative, the Dowager of Pfeffers, an angelic creature, who reared me as her daughter. When she felt her end approaching, she called in her son Baron Pfeffers, then a sexagenarian, and taking a hand of each of us in her failing grasp, she said: "My death will put an end to your simple friendship: promise me to unite your twin loneliness, and I shall die at ease. O my son! I confide her childhood to your old age, and your old age to her childhood." She added, turning to me, "It is not a husband I am giving you, it is a father!"

Count [*with great emotion*] — And he really was a father to you?

Baroness — The most respectful of fathers. But I do not know why I give myself up to these memories — Give me back my bracelet.

Count [*aside*] — She is an angel!

Baroness — Gracious! how awkward we are with one hand! Come to my assistance, Count! [*Holds out arm to the* COUNT, *who tries to refasten the bracelet.*] You are not a bit more skillful than I am. See if we can accomplish it with three hands. [*She helps the* COUNT. *Their eyes meet; the* COUNT *turns away in embarrassment.* BARONESS, *aside.*] Poor fellow! let anybody come now and tell him stories about me, and they'll get a fine reception! [*Aloud.*] Shall you accompany your betrothed to my place this evening?

Count — My betrothed —

Baroness — I wish it. I have never been happy; but I love others' happiness. The blossoming out of pure love in a young soul must be charming. Mlle. Fernande must adore you.

Count — If she loves anybody —

Baroness — It isn't you? Why not?

Count [*recollecting himself*] — Nobody. I meant to say that she is marrying me in order to marry.

Baroness [*aside*] — There's somebody — I'll find out who. [*Aloud.*] And when is the wedding?

Count [*sadly*] — The first bann will be published to-morrow, and I am just going to buy the wedding gift.

Baroness [*aside*] — Marriages farther along than that have been known to fail. [*Aloud.*] Nothing is left for me but to congratulate you.

Scene XI.

Enter Mme. Maréchal, *in handsome street costume.*

Mme. Maréchal — Do excuse me, dear Baroness! I was only just informed you were here.

Baroness — In very good company, as you see, madame. But you were going out: don't let me detain you.

Mme. Maréchal — Oh, I assure you, there is nothing pressing.

Baroness — I ought to confess that my visit was not to yourself. I had a little communication to make to M. Maréchal. Be kind enough merely to open for me the sanctum he retires to.

Mme. Maréchal — What! haven't all fallen before you?

Baroness — The servant pleaded his confinement, and I did not insist.

Scene XII.

Enter Maximilien.

Mme. Maréchal — And what is my husband doing, M. Gérard, that he bars his door?

Baroness [*aside*] — The secretary! If it should be he?

Maximilien — I think, madame, he is learning his speech by heart.

Baroness — Then he intends to speak it?

Maximilien — Yes, madame.

Baroness [*to* Mme. Maréchal] — Then I have hardly anything more to say to him, and it will be enough for me to peep through his door. By the way, you haven't forgotten your promise for this evening?

Mme. Maréchal — One doesn't forget such things.

Baroness — If M. Gérard has nothing better to do, I should be charmed to receive him also.

Maximilien — Me, madame?

Count [*aside*] — She has great need of inviting that fellow!

Baroness — At your age, sir, one loves to see illustrious men close to. There are some of them in my drawing-room.

Maximilien — I am extremely grateful to you, madame.

Baroness — You will come, will you not? [*To* Mme. Maréchal.] Please show me the way, madame.

Mme. Maréchal — I will go first, then. [*Goes out.*

Baroness [*low, to the* COUNT, *indicating* MAXIMILIEN] — That young man is very handsome!

Count [*stiffly*] — I had not noticed it.

Baroness [*aside*] — He's the one. [*They go out.*

SCENE XIII.

Maximilien [*alone*] — Oh no! I won't go and pass my evening at that Baroness'. I'll pass it with my old Giboyer. [*Taking his hat from the desk.*] I need to solace my heart. That patrician girl's two or three words of excuse have cut me deeper than her insult. She thought she'd do things in the grand way, and that a half-reparation was enough for a poor devil like me! Here's for Giboyer's.

SCENE XIV.

Enter FERNANDE.

Fernande — I wish to speak to you, sir.

Maximilien — To me, mademoiselle?

Fernande — Weren't you expecting it? Haven't you seen in all I did and all I said since this morning my deep regret for what took place yesterday?

Maximilien — You regret —? I am too much honored.

Fernande — It is not enough, I know. There are offenses that exact as complete a reparation from a woman as a man. I slandered you in my thoughts, and I ask your pardon. Does that suffice you?

Maximilien [*advancing*] — I thank you.

Fernande — Well, thank me by staying with my father.

Maximilien — As to that, mademoiselle, it is impossible.

Fernande — Then you don't wish me to believe myself forgiven?

Maximilien — Indeed you are, from the depths of my heart.

Fernande — Then don't leave me in remorse for having lost you your place.

Maximilien — Don't be uneasy about me, mademoiselle. I am not worried about earning my living — it doesn't cost much. You have rendered me a great service in opening my eyes to the dangers my honor was running here. Appearances

are against me, I take myself sharply to task for it, and my predecessors' example accuses me. If I remain, everybody will condemn me like them, and it will be justice.

Fernande — Justice?

Maximilien — Indeed, yes. I shouldn't be much better than they if I resigned myself to be despised like them, wrong or right.

Fernande — But the witness of your conscience?

Maximilien [*smiling*] — I know her: she is a meddler, and would pick a quarrel with me on the pretext that one has no right to defy opinion except for the accomplishment of a duty. Now it isn't one of those to spread jam on your bread.

Fernande — You are right: you are an honest man.

Maximilien — Ah, mademoiselle, honesty is the alphabet.

Fernande — Few people put it like you.

Maximilien — You are very skeptical for your age.

Fernande [*dropping her eyes*] — You have told me that already — twice.

Maximilien — Oh! mademoiselle, I didn't want to make any allusion — I didn't mean — forgive me!

Fernande [*after a silence*] — I must not be judged like others, sir. My infancy was not sheltered by a mother; it grew up with only the feeling of lawless freedom and primitive instinct. At the age when a child begins to lean on its father, a strange woman came between mine and me: I saw that my protector was too confiding, and I felt him threatened with — what? I knew nothing about it; but my jealous tenderness became a clairvoyance. You ought to pity me, monsieur: I have lived in pain beyond my years, a man's pain and not a girl's. Struggles have been fought in my brain which have changed the sex of my mind, to put it so. In place of feminine delicacy, a sentiment of manly honor has been developed in me; my worth lies wholly in that; and I give you a great proof of my esteem in explaining to you my mental laws, unfamiliar to your own esteem.

Maximilien — Say to my respect, mademoiselle.

Fernande — Our paths have met for an instant, and are about to separate, probably forever; but I shall remember this meeting, and I trust you will not forget it.

Maximilien — Indeed not — and my humble prayers will follow you in the brilliancy of your new existence. May it hold all you promise yourself in it!

Fernande [*with a sad smile*] — I have not been spoiled, and I am not very exacting.

Maximilien — But your dream appears to me aristocratic enough.

Fernande — Do you think I am hunting a title?

Maximilien — Heavens! there couldn't be anybody that — pardon me, mademoiselle, I am forgetting myself — I am abusing the chance that has placed me so deep in your confidence.

Fernande [*with an effort*] — Why can't you understand, after this confidence, that my father's house has become intolerable to me, and that I accept the first hand that is offered to get away from it?

Maximilien — What! is that the only reason? — It is God's mercy that has thrown me in your way. Don't take counsel of desperation, mademoiselle; things are not so serious as you think. I know positively, I know by the Marquis d'Auberive, that your stepmother's transgressions are only romantic child's-play.

Fernande — Would to Heaven! but —

Maximilien — But what? what have you come across? Letters, avowals? that may be, but I assure you that is all.

Fernande — And what more could there be?

Maximilien [*regarding her with astonishment, and after a silence, bowing very low*] — True.

Fernande — You see I have even better reasons for leaving than you. And I am gratified to M. d'Outreville for taking me away. — I hear people coming: let us each take up our path again. Farewell, sir. [*Exit.*

Maximilien [*alone*] — O chastity! [*Remains an instant without moving, turned toward the door where* FERNANDE *went out; then goes to his desk, sits down and dips his pen in the ink.*] Hold up — what a fool I am! my job is done. [*Rising.*] Maréchal doesn't need me any more till this evening. I am free! [*Takes his hat.*] What shall I do with my day? Curious what a bore things are! Pshaw! I'll go and take a walk on the boulevards. [*Sits down.*] Thunder! but I'm tired of everything!

Enter GIBOYER.

Giboyer — Morning, boy.

Maximilien — You, old friend? You've come in the nick of time! What are you at to-day? I've got a furlough, let's go to Viroflay.

Giboyer — The fifteenth of January!

Maximilien — Oh, so it is.

Giboyer — You blossom out too soon. Calm these spring ebullitions and listen to me with both ears. — Maximilien, we're rich!

Maximilien [*joyfully*] — Rich?

Giboyer — I've come into a legacy from a relative I didn't know.

Maximilien — A legacy?

Giboyer — Twelve thousand francs a year.

Maximilien [*sadly*] — Is that all?

Giboyer — "Is that all!" Does my lord hobnob with millionaires?

Maximilien — No, but you had the air of announcing Pactolus [Midas' golden river].

Giboyer — I believe you! A thousand francs a month strikes me as mythological enough.

Maximilien — It isn't wealth, my poor friend.

Giboyer —Anyhow, it's independence. You are to be in nobody's service any longer, boy. Give your notice to M. Maréchal.

Maximilien — It's given.

Giboyer — Pshaw!

Maximilien — I haven't waited for your millions to get bored at being with the others.

Giboyer — All is for the best! You are going to resume your tour around the world.

Maximilien — To leave Paris?

Giboyer — Who's holding you there?

Maximilien — Why — you.

Giboyer — You can make believe I am still at Lyons. It isn't for my pleasure I separate from you. When we want claret to age quickly, we send it to sea; it's an outlay of money, but an economy of time. In a year, I shall have a Maximilien home from the Indies.

Maximilien — You are going to send me to the Indies?

Giboyer — Not there alone: to America too.

Maximilien — What am I to do there?

Giboyer — Well, good Lord! — to study democracy.

Maximilien — Thanks! It's too far.

Giboyer — Farther than Viroflay; but you worship voyages.

Maximilien — I don't seem to care for them any more.

Giboyer — Humph! — then what do you care for?

Maximilien — I care for — But why don't you go to America yourself, to get cured of your chimeras once for all?

Giboyer — My chimeras? — Aren't they yours any longer? This is something new! What is there back of all this?

Maximilien [*impatiently*] — Nothing. What do you want there should be?

Giboyer [*taking him by the arm*] — Now look me in the face!

Maximilien [*shaking himself loose*] — Let me alone! Hasn't a fellow the right to believe anything but what you teach him? [*Walks toward the rear.*

Giboyer — Oh! — And may I ask what you do believe?

Maximilien — I believe the only solid basis in the political order, as in the moral order, is faith — there!

Giboyer — You are a Legitimist at present?

Maximilien — That doesn't make one a Legitimist.

Giboyer — Don't play with words. I know but one way of introducing faith into the political domain; that is, to profess that all power comes from God, and consequently owes no accounting except to God. That is an opinion to be considered, I don't say it isn't; but when a man professes it, whatever party he thinks he belongs to, he is a Legitimist.

Maximilien — Well, let it go that I am one.

Giboyer — You are?

Maximilien — Why not?

Giboyer — Is my life to be stolen from under me a second time? [*Going up to* MAXIMILIEN.] Who has robbed me of you, cruel boy? Where did you escape me? Who has perverted you? There's a woman back of all this! None but women make these conversions! You are no Legitimist, you're in love!

Maximilien — I!

Giboyer — There's some siren here who has been amusing herself teaching you the catechism.

Maximilien [*going to the left*] — Madame Maréchal a siren! My only catechism is a speech of her husband's I've been thinking of while I copied it.

Giboyer — Maréchal's speech! A heap of sophisms and threadbare spouting!

Maximilien — What do you know about it?

Giboyer — Lord bless you, I wrote it myself!

Maximilien — You?

Giboyer [*after some hesitation*] — Well, yes, I! So you see what it's worth by the yard.

Maximilien — What, you worked at that trade? That was before your legacy, of course?

Giboyer — Despise me, trample on me, I don't expect anything better; but give me the integrity of your mind, which is the foundation of my house of life, my rehabilitation in my own eyes, my resurrection! I have dishonored in my person a soldier of Truth, I am no longer worthy to serve her; but I owe her a substitute, and I promised myself it should be you. Don't desert me, my dear child!

Maximilien — Your truth is no longer mine! The one I recognize and wish to serve is the one that dictated your speech. What astonishes me is that it hasn't disabused you of your Utopias yourself.

Giboyer — Ah, the worst of Utopias is the one that wants to make humanity retrace its steps.

Maximilien — When it has mistaken the road!

Giboyer — Rivers don't mistake, and they submerge the madmen who try to dam them back.

Maximilien — Phrases!

Giboyer — Facts! — Ask for the Restoration.

Maximilien — In a word, you have nothing to put in place of what you have destroyed.

Giboyer — We have nothing? And where have you seen in history that a society has replaced another without bringing into the world a superior dogma? — Antiquity did not admit equality before either human or divine law: the Middle Ages proclaimed it in heaven, '89 proclaimed it on earth.

Maximilien [*going to the right*] — You are right: there, are you satisfied?

Giboyer — Don't skulk out of the discussion, boy: I stand in so much need of persuading you! It isn't an opinion I am defending, it is my life!

Maximilien — Your life! See here, is there a society possible without a hierarchy?

Giboyer — No, a hundred times no.

Maximilien — Then what do you make of equality?

Giboyer — Oh, the confusion of tongues! Equality isn't a level.

Maximilien — Then what is it?

Giboyer — That great word can have but one sense, here below as above: to each according to his works! Is that, I ask you, a principle incompatible with a hierarchy?

Maximilien — It is inapplicable.

Giboyer — It is applied, in part at least, and we can already judge of its solidity. The administration, the magistracy, the army, not to speak of the clergy, are they not all actual hierarchies of merit? Well! have they budged for sixty years? Have our revolutions dreamed of laying a hand on them? They are so solid they sustain all the rest. And is it this problem half solved that they dare to proclaim insoluble? Instead of completing the edifice in its provisional parts, do they declare it stricken and vanquished by decay, and prefer to trust themselves to ruins? And those who do that are enemies of Utopias? I've written a book I'm going to make you read.

Maximilien — No.

Giboyer — No?

Maximilien — What's the good of it? If it don't convince me, it's lost time.

Giboyer — But suppose it should convince you?

Maximilien — Who told you I want to be convinced?

Giboyer — There's another woman here besides Madame Maréchal!

Maximilien — You are crazy! There's nobody here but an heiress.

Giboyer — Ah! that explains everything.

Maximilien [*indignantly*] — If I were tempted to love her, I should scorn myself, for I don't want to sell anything of mine: neither my heart, nor my pen.

Giboyer — Nor your pen? — Ingrate! when it was for you alone! —

Maximilien — For me? What right had you to render me dishonorable services? Who told you I didn't prefer poverty? Is that what you call your legacy? You can keep it, I won't touch it! [GIBOYER *falls on a sofa, his face in his hands.*] Forgive me, my old friend, you didn't know what you were doing.

Giboyer — I knew I was devoting myself to you, that your youth must be saved from the experiences mine had succumbed to, and I have licked the mud off your road; but it was not for you to reproach me with it. Go! my pen is not the first thing I have sold for you. — I had already sold my liberty!

Maximilien — Your liberty?

Giboyer — For two years, to pay your fees at college, I spent months in prison for a paper, at so much a year. — But what does it matter! I am a blackguard, and you want nothing more to do with me. Ah! God hits me too hard! and I am not a bad man, either. There are sad destinies. It is too heavy duties that have ruined me. I began for my father — I have ended —

Maximilien [*dropping on his knees*] — For your son!

[GIBOYER *seizes him passionately in his arms.*

ACT IV.

Scene: Large drawing-room at the BARONESS'. *Two doors opening at rear, giving on a second drawing-room where a number of aged persons are seen playing whist or conversing; a side door, also open, gives on a reception room, by which entrance is made from outside. Tea-table at rear; sofa at right, set diagonally; fauteuil and chair at left; sofa against the wall; fauteuil near the table, left rear.*

SCENE I.

Present: BARONESS *and* FERNANDE, *leaving the large drawing-room.*

Baroness — You see, mademoiselle, I told no falsehood in saying that my salon is not lively.

Fernande — It is very interesting, madame: you have a reunion of the celebrities of all the régimes.

Baroness — Reunion — say union! But those celebrities do not compose a bouquet of the highest freshness, I admit. So I have resolved to put new life into it by the introduction of some right-thinking [*religious*] young ladies, and I am waiting this very evening for two or three as courageous as you.

Fernande — Easy courage, madame.

Servant [*announcing*] — His Lordship the Viscount de Vrillière!

[VISCOUNT *enters and bows to* BARONESS, *who gives him her hand.*]

Baroness — Your mother must be better since here you are!

Viscount — Entirely recovered, thank Heaven!

Baroness — Then hurry and reassure that kind Mme. de Vieuxtour. It was only a moment ago she was asking me the news.

Viscount — Excellent woman !

[*Bows and enters rear drawing-room.*

Baroness — That quadragenarian is the baby of our group, — the need of some young people is making itself felt too ; but it is very delicate, — I do not wish the shadow of coquetry here with me. I am much afraid of being reduced to small-fry of no consequence — like your father's secretary, for instance.

Fernande — You have not made a fortunate stroke in your attempt at illustration. M. Gérard is anything but a small-fry of no consequence ; on the contrary, he is a man of the first merit — at least they say so.

Baroness — I don't dispute that : I meant without consequence among women. A woman of assured social standing can't pay attention to a nobody — isn't that true?

Fernande — You will think me very plebeian, madame, for holding that a man of honor is not a nobody.

Baroness [*aside*] — Isn't that clear enough? [*Aloud.*] By a nobody, I mean a man without birth. As for the rest, M. Gérard is charming : he has a natural distinction very rare even with us. If he entered a drawing-room along with any given gentleman, and the two were heard announced, it is unquestionably to him the grand name would be applied. He was evidently not made to be a secretary.

Fernande — And he is not one any longer.

Baroness — Ah ! since when?

Fernande — Since yesterday.

Servant [*announcing*] — The Chevalier de Germoise.

[CHEVALIER *comes in and bows to* BARONESS, *who gives him her hand.*]

Baroness — You are among the last to come.

Chevalier — Happy that you notice it, madame !

Baroness — M. d'Auberive was beginning to be impatient.

Chevalier — His boston [*card game*] doesn't like to wait. I will offer myself up to his blows.

[*Bows and enters rear drawing-room.*

Baroness [*to* FERNANDE] — And why isn't he a secretary any longer?

Fernande — For the reason you gave: he was not made to be one.

Baroness [*aside*] — She lowers her eyes. [*Aloud.*] I don't know why I am so interested in him. Has he any other position?

Fernande — No, madame, not that I know of; and it would be very kind of you, since you are interested in him, to exercise yourself in his favor. You are all-powerful.

Baroness — That is putting it pretty strongly; but I *should* be grieved not to succeed in being of service to you.

Fernande — Oh, I should be so grateful to you, madame!

Servant [*announcing*] — M. Couturier of Haut-Sarthe.

Baroness — Pardon me! here is an important personage I have a word or so to say to. [*Taking* FERNANDE *out.*] And besides, if I confiscate you to my own profit, I shall get into hot water with M. d'Outreville.

Fernande — Do you think so?

Baroness [*having come to the rear*] — I will see about that poor young man.

Fernande — Thank you!

[*They press hands.* FERNANDE *returns to drawing-room.*

Baroness [*aside*] — That's one! Now for cutting M. Maréchal's glory short.

SCENE II.

Baroness [*to* M. COUTURIER] — How is your Lordship?

Couturier — And your Ladyship?

Baroness — A little bewildered.

Couturier — What about?

[*They sit down, left, one on a fauteuil, the other on a chair.*

Baroness — About the strangest thing, the most wonderful, the most surprising, the most — See Mme. de Sévigné[1] for the rest of the litany. "I'll give you ten, I'll give you a hundred."

Couturier — Give me one.

Baroness — I had a visit from that poor M. d'Aigremont this afternoon.

Couturier — Why "poor"? is he sick?

Baroness — Worse than that! You'll see! The conversation naturally turned to politics, to our plan of campaign, to Maréchal, to the speech.

Couturier — Well?

[1] Vol. 15, p. 64, of this set.

Baroness — *Didn't* he regret that they had not intrusted it to him?

Couturier — He? a Protestant? He's mad.

Baroness — He is so, I said that myself at once. It is the more disquieting that there's method in his madness.

Couturier — How is that?

Baroness — He says that religious dissensions, like political dissensions, ought to be blotted out in face of the common enemy, that all churches ought to join hands to combat the revolution, that a Protestant pleading our cause would have more weight, that it would be a great example, that — Oh, I can't tell you any more of his extravagances!

Couturier — Permit me! — all this is not so extravagant, madame; on the contrary, it is of a depth, a breadth of view, which astonishes me in D'Aigremont.

Baroness [*innocently*] — Is it?

Couturier — That idea is none of his, some one must have suggested it to him. I am surprised that so elevated a mind as yours was not struck with it as I am!

Baroness — I am only a woman, and I abase myself before your powerful reason.

Couturier — Our speech delivered by a Protestant — that would be a first triumph in itself!

Baroness — Oh, good gracious!

Couturier — Why that exclamation!

Baroness — I hope you are not going to take it away from poor Maréchal?

Couturier — No, of course not; but there will be more than one speech delivered on the subject.

Baroness [*emphatically*] — Give the others to whom you will: it is the first that strikes home. Belling the cat is the vital operation.

Couturier — That is true.

Baroness — It is, isn't it?

Couturier — So true that every other consideration pales before it.

Baroness — What do you mean?

Couturier — Dear Baroness, in the name of our cause, I beg you to abandon your protégé.

Baroness — Alas! you attack me where I am defenseless. I can refuse nothing to the name you invoke. But is there really a transcendent enough interest there for us to resolve on

hurting that excellent man's feelings? It is dreadfully hard, my friend.

Couturier [*rising*] — What a slip it was not to have thought of D'Aigremont sooner! Then, too, why suppose he'll accept? Here we have already engaged Maréchal.

Baroness [*rising*] — We made him ourselves, and by that title he really has some rights over us.

Couturier [*shrewdly*] — Pardon me, the contrary would be more just.

Baroness — So I've put my foot in it again! — Poor Maréchal! — I know quite well what could be said to him: he could be made to understand that this is not a question of persons; that you in his place would not hesitate to efface yourself for the general interest.

Couturier — And that where I would not hesitate, it would be a fine thing for M. Maréchal to hesitate, you will own.

Baroness — All the same, I can't tell you how painful that sort of execution is to me; but after all, my friendship for Maréchal is obliged to surrender to your arguments.

Couturier — I expected no less from your patriotism.

Baroness — Not all the members of the committee will be so disinterested as I am, I can tell you. You'll meet with resistance from M. d'Auberive.

Couturier — Yes, he is greatly attached to Maréchal.

Baroness — All the more because he is marrying Mlle. Fernande to a cousin of his whom you'll see here.

Couturier — Is that so! That scion of the first families consents to cross his blood with ours?

Baroness — He probably conjectures that that small personage may have blue blood in her veins. But that has nothing to do with us. You understand what value he attaches to coloring the misalliance by a quasi-nobility of position.

Couturier — Thanks for the information. I will go at once and gather in all the other adhesions: they will force his.

Baroness [*looking to the left*] — Mme. Maréchal! Goodness, how afflicting all this is!

Couturier — Break it gently to her; as for me, I shall do my duty, as I have always done, without hesitation and without weakness.

Baroness — Antique soul!

[M. Couturier *goes out by one of the rear doors.* Mme. Maréchal *enters by the other.*

Scene III.

Baroness [*aside*] — That's two! Now for the other one! [*Aloud.*] You don't think of going away, I hope?

Mme. Maréchal — Pardon me, I am tired. Nothing less than the pleasure of coming to see you could have brought me out this evening. I don't know what has happened to M. Maréchal.

Baroness — He has been seeking a little solitude in his library: let us respect his meditations. I merely have a piece of confidential information to ask of you. [*Conducting her to a sofa.*] Won't you favor me with five minutes of your fatigue, my dear friend? [*They seat themselves.*

Mme. Maréchal — You will make me forget it, dear Baroness.

Baroness — Why is M. Gérard leaving your husband?

Mme. Maréchal — He is a very proud young man, to whom dependence is insupportable.

Baroness — Yes, that is the official motive; but I want you to tell me the true motive. I must know what to count on with that youth before I stir around in his behalf.

Mme. Maréchal — Take him under your wing, Baroness, he is worthy of it! He has the most delicate, the most loyal, the most reliable heart that can be imagined.

Baroness — You charm me. I didn't know — but I was afraid he might be an intriguer. I prefer to believe in the sincerity of his love.

Mme. Maréchal [*dropping her eyes*] — His love! Who for?

Baroness — Why — Fernande.

Mme. Maréchal [*sharply*] — Fernande! Poor fellow! He is a thousand miles from thinking of her.

Baroness — Really? Are you quite sure?

Mme. Maréchal [*uneasily*] — But what makes you think —

Baroness — Oh dear, nothing; let's talk no more about it; I was mistaken.

Mme. Maréchal — A woman of your tact is not mistaken except on strong appearances. What have you thought noticeable?

Baroness — What can I say to you? I foolishly imagined that Fernande's marriage was not unrelated to the young man's departure. Did he speak of leaving you before D'Outreville's suit?

Mme. Maréchal [*struck with this*] — No; and it was that

very day he sent in his resignation. But no, he didn't learn of the marriage till this morning.

Baroness — There, you see! And unless we suppose that Fernande informed him of it yesterday, which is impossible —

Mme. Maréchal [*greatly stirred up*] — Why impossible?

Baroness — Well! we should have to admit that the fellow is not indifferent to her, which I don't wish to believe. That is not the difficulty; but she has just been recommending him to me with a warmth rather surprising in a person usually so self-contained.

Mme. Maréchal — Is that so?

Baroness — She has a determined little head.

Mme. Maréchal — Don't I know it? And that Gérard — Could I have been played with so far?

Baroness — But we won't be in a hurry —

Mme. Maréchal — A thousand little things come back to me now: that man's offended air, Fernande's supplicating attitude — she tried to be alone with him — [*turning toward the drawing-room*] and there, look at the two of them talking together! Have they forgotten altogether that they are not alone? That simpleton D'Outreville that doesn't see anything!

Baroness — I wouldn't be positive of it; he is looking at them with an uneasy air, as if they were in the way to rob him. Hm! all this might have a bad ending; the marriage hasn't taken place yet — look out!

Mme. Maréchal — You alarm me!

Baroness — You have no time to lose, if you still wish the alliance of the Count. I cannot believe in Fernande's duplicity; she has been led astray by her unknown; recall her to herself, by making her suddenly realize the gulf that separates her from that fellow.

Mme. Maréchal — Yes, but by what means?

Baroness — Publicly put that whippersnapper back into his place.

Mme. Maréchal — On what occasion?

Baroness — Occasion? Why, here, this very evening, one can be found; let's look for it. A humiliated love doesn't last long.

Mme. Maréchal — You are right — thank you, dear Baroness! Fernande shall be rescued — [*aside*] and I revenged! [*Aloud, seeing* MAXIMILIEN *leaving the drawing-room.*] There's

that little cheat; let's go back in — I shan't be mistress of myself.

Baroness — Yes, don't let us seem to be conspiring.

[*They go out by the left rear, while* MAXIMILIEN *enters by right rear.*

SCENE IV.

Maximilien [*alone*] — I didn't want to come — why did I come? Oh, how handsome she is! What an adorable spirit! I feel myself invaded by an insane love, and already I don't belong to myself enough to defend myself! Well! why struggle against myself? why cling to my reason, which is escaping me? No, let's yield to the intoxications of the abyss! The die is cast! I love her! I love her! I love her! Ah, the sweet resolution! how entertaining it is to be in society! I resume interest in everything —

SCENE V.

Servant [*announcing*] — M. de Boyergi!

Maximilien — If only to see Déodat's successor!

Maximilien [*to* GIBOYER *as he enters*] — *You?*

Giboyer [*aside, with an angry gesture*] — Go and take a walk!

Maximilien — Is it you that sign "Boyergi"?

Giboyer [*sourly*] — What's that to you?

Maximilien — Then you are going to continue that horrible trade? Poor father!

Giboyer — In the first place, you promised to forget that I was your father!

Maximilien — I promised not to tell of it; but to forget it! — Did I promise to be an ingrate?

Giboyer — Ah! — I ask only one proof of gratitude, and that is to let me accomplish my work. I don't need your respect.

Maximilien — But *I* need to respect you! What sort of unrighteous contest would you set up between my tenderness and my honor? Which of the two do you wish to overpower the other?

Giboyer [*seated on the sofa*] — But I can't let you get used to misery!

Maximilien — Do you think I will go on accepting your

benefactions, knowing what they cost you? Haven't you put me in a way of earning my living and yours too? Have we so many necessities, you and I? We know poverty: let's take up the road again cheerfully, arm in arm. Won't it be charming to live by our labor in a garret, we two?

Giboyer — Charming for me, yes!

Maximilien — And for me, then! I know now what you are. I am proud of you: I have read your book!

Giboyer — Has it convinced you?

Maximilien — Most assuredly! [*Putting his hand on* GIBOYER'S *head.*] And I don't want you to debase any longer the great mind that is there. — My old friend, how you must have suffered, vilifying your noble ideas in that crab's journal! Quit it, I beg of you — [*smiling*] I *order* you! Maybe I haven't some rights over you too? You have licked enough mud off my road, as you put it: wipe off your mouth by kissing me. [*Kisses him on the cheek.*]

Giboyer — Brave child!

Maximilien — You'll obey me?

Giboyer — I've got to. Aren't you my master?

Maximilien — Everything succeeds with me to-day. Thank the Lord!

Giboyer — Everything! Why, what more is there?

Maximilien — Nothing.

Giboyer — And you have secrets from your old comrade?

Maximilien — We'll write your resignation when I go home with you, and I'll carry it in to-morrow morning early, so that the gentlemen of the committee will have noses a foot long[1] when they wake up. How delightful to waft away their slugger! You don't suspect what they mean to do here: it's an actual conspiracy against our ideas.

Giboyer — Very plainly: the Toryism of the drawing-rooms, with ramifications in the dining-rooms and the boudoirs.

Maximilien — You may joke; but don't be too confident! That party calls itself legion.

Giboyer — A legion of colonels without regiments, a staff without troops. They take the curious folks who watch them prancing around for their army; they pass the spectators in review: but the day of a serious enrollment they'll find themselves beating the roll-call in the desert.

[1] *I.e.*, be tricked like a pantomime clown. The literal translation is retained here because the phrase is singled out for sarcasm in the article following.

Maximilien — At that rate they are not very formidable.

Giboyer — Very much so to the governments they uphold. Those fellows can't upset anything but the carriages they drive, but they upset them with a vengeance!

Two Servants *bring in tea.*

Maximilien [*looking toward the drawing-room*] — Sh! they're coming! The Marquis d'Auberive! Who's he with?

Giboyer — With the eminent Couturier of Haut-Sarthe — a reformed liberal!

Maximilien — They seem to adore each other.

Giboyer — I should say so! Brothers and friends! Do you know, I amused myself in my article this morning by letting slip a few slams at this same Couturier: the Marquis blue-penciled the passage, with the simple and pregnant remark, "No more of that!"

Maximilien — Well, the Marquis won't blue-pencil you any more.

Scene VI.

The entire company gather in the drawing-room.

Marquis [*to* M. Couturier, *front of stage, left*] — Since the committee is unanimous for M. d'Aigremont, I can only bow to its decision, painful as it is to me.

Couturier — It only took it in self-defense, Marquis, and in presence of a higher interest, which you recognize yourself.

Marquis — I don't say no, my dear fellow, but I'd rather somebody else took the job of dealing poor Maréchal the blow.

Couturier — We thought it would be less severe from your hands; but if it costs you too much, I will take it on myself.

Marquis — Thank you. [*Seats himself at the left.* Couturier *loses himself in the throng.*]

Chevalier [*to a lady*] — That little Gérard is really more of a man than Count d'Outreville; but is it quite sure that Mlle. Fernande has a special liking for the secretary? The Baroness has a fear of it that is very like a certainty.

[*Leads her to a fauteuil.*

Mme. Maréchal [*seated on the sofa, to the* Count *who brings her tea*] — Boiling, if you please; I like it boiling.

Mme. de la Vieuxtour [*behind the sofa, to* Viscount de Vrillière] — Poor woman! she likes everything that burns her fingers.

Viscount de Vrillière — Gad! these plebeian ambitions well deserve to be scalded a little.

Mme. de la Vieuxtour — After all, the Baroness may be mistaken.

Viscount de Vrillière — Huh! the young man is charming.

Mme. de la Vieuxtour — Not so much as the title of Countess. [*During this dialogue she has ascended the stage to the center, and looks at the audience as she says:*] Father Vernier was admirable this morning. Were you there, M. de Vrillière?

Viscount de Vrillière — I couldn't get in.

Giboyer [*aside*] — People turned away.

Mme. de la Vieuxtour — You missed it. He had thoughts on charity so touching, so novel!

Giboyer [*aside*] — Did he say it wasn't necessary to give it?

Mme. Maréchal — I was shocked by Mme. Dervieux's toilette. Did you notice it?

Baroness — No.

Mme. Maréchal — Just fancy, she had on a buff satin dress trimmed with cherry velvet clear around, coat of the same trimmed with ermine, and her hat was white tulle puffed, covered with small cherry feathers. We go to church to commune with ourselves and not to make a display, don't you think?

Marquis [*at the other end of the stage*] — And I am pleased to see, madame, that you were communing.

Mme. Maréchal — Of course I was: I had a Carmelite dress.

Mme. de la Vieuxtour — Which fitted you ravishingly.

Baroness [*going over to* GIBOYER, *behind the sofa*] — Do you not take tea, monsieur?

Giboyer — Many thanks, madame: I am afraid of it.

Baroness [*in* MME. MARÉCHAL'S *ear, indicating on the other side* MAXIMILIEN *standing and talking to* FERNANDE *seated*] — Now's the time. [*Goes toward the rear.*]

Mme. Maréchal — M. Gérard! take away my cup.

Count [*rushing forward to take it at a sign from the* BARONESS] — Madame —

[MAXIMILIEN, *who has come forward at* MME. MARÉCHAL'S *summons, stops on seeing the* COUNT'S *movement.*

Mme. Maréchal — Let it alone, Count — that young man is there.

Fernande [*aside*] — This is too much! [*Rises and goes quickly to the table at rear.* MAXIMILIEN *takes a step backward.*]

Giboyer [*aside*] — Ringing him up for a servant!

Mme. Maréchal [*still holding her cup*] — M. Gérard!

Fernande [*from the table*] — M. Gérard! will you permit me to wait on you?

Maximilien — Mademoiselle, I have refused it already.

Fernande [*coming to him with a cup of tea*] — You will not refuse it from my hand. [MAXIMILIEN *bows and takes the cup. General astonishment. Profound silence.*]

Giboyer [*aside*] — There's the secret! It casts a chill. [*To* MME. MARÉCHAL.] How that cup embarrasses you! In default of my nephew, madame, let the uncle be your domestic. [*Takes the cup from the hands of the stupefied* MME. MARÉCHAL, *and carries it back to the table.*]

Baroness [*to* MME. MARÉCHAL] — My poor friend! who could have foreseen it?

Mme. Maréchal — And her father who isn't here!

[*They go back into the drawing-room; the guests straggle after, a few at a time.*]

SCENE VII.

Count d'Outreville [*to* MARQUIS] — Well, cousin, what do you say to this?

Marquis — I say that Fernande has made delicate reparation for an impertinence of her stepmother's, that's all.

Count — "That's all"? But she loves that young man, monsieur, she loves him!

Marquis — You're crazy.

Count — Possibly; but I notify you that I renounce this marriage.

Marquis — You renounce —?

Count — Plebeian and compromised both is too much!

Marquis — Effectually compromised indeed, if you break it; for that rupture would confer a grave significance on an incident by itself insignificant.

Count — I am very sorry; but —

Marquis — Consider, monsieur, that Fernande is my ward, — so to speak, my daughter; that it is I who arranged this marriage, and therefore I am in some sort responsible for the consequences.

Count — Not so much as I am, cousin; consequently you will freely admit that I must be the judge of the question.

Marquis — So you refuse to marry her?

Count — I do!

Marquis — Very well, monsieur! you will account for it to me.

Count — Fight — with my second father!

Marquis — I disinherit you to put you at your ease.

Count — But your white hair, monsieur —

Marquis — Don't concern yourself about that. I am as strong as ever with the sword.

Count — But suppose she loves this young man?

Marquis — If she does love him, which I deny, she has a brave heart, in which nothing can prevail over sworn faith. Let's go and sit beside her to protect her by our presence from the charitable insinuations of all those devout people. Be a French knight for once in your life.

Maréchal [*entering*] — Ah, Marquis!

Marquis [*to the* COUNT] — Go on without me, monsieur: I will rejoin you. [COUNT *goes out.*

SCENE VIII.

Maréchal — What was the Count talking to you about? Was it that thoughtless performance of my daughter's? — for it was nothing but thoughtlessness.

Marquis — The Count and I are convinced of that.

Maréchal — Ah! I can draw breath again! My wife had struck despair into my soul. So the marriage still holds?

Marquis — More than ever; for it has become indispensable to Fernande. You understand that a rupture, after this foolish incursion, would compromise her irrevocably!

Maréchal — That's so!

Marquis — Consequently, if an event should happen that rendered your position toward your son-in-law more difficult, that would be no reason for taking up your old repugnances to an aristocratic alliance.

Maréchal — Certainly not; but what event?

Marquis — If, for one cause or another, you should momentarily lose the moral superiority which your political rôle gives you —

Maréchal — But how should I lose it?

Marquis — M. de la Haut-Sarthe has something to say to you.

Maréchal — What? you make me tremble.

Marquis — He'll tell you.

Maréchal — In the name of Heaven, Marquis, explain yourself. I have courage.

Marquis — Well! — the committee has decided — in spite of my efforts, my poor friend! — but I was alone on my side.

Maréchal — What has it decided?

Marquis — That the speech is to be taken away from you.

Maréchal — But this is infamous! why, I know it by heart.

Marquis — Too bad! you'll have to forget it.

Maréchal — Never! How have I earned this insult?

Marquis — They are distressed at inflicting it on you, they ask your pardon; but the interest of the cause takes precedence of everything. They have found a Protestant on the right side.

Maréchal — A Protestant? why, it's absurd! My speech will have no common-sense then.

Marquis [*seeing* GIBOYER *enter*] — There, my dear fellow, is the author of your speech.

Maréchal — M. de Boyergi?

Marquis — Ask him what he thinks of it. As for me, I've got to chaperon your daughter. [*Goes out.*

SCENE IX.

Maréchal — What do you think about it, M. de Boyergi?

Giboyer — About what, monsieur?

Maréchal — About their choosing a Protestant to deliver my — your — speech?

Giboyer — Those gentlemen regard it as a brilliant homage rendered to truth: I think it furnishes a brilliant start-off to a reply. [*In an oratorical tone.*] What, gentlemen! is it a Protestant you have come to hear? But if he is sincere, the first thing he has to do on leaving here is to abjure you!

Maréchal — That's so! I ask you just a minute, what's a Protestant that don't protest?

Giboyer — What is it, gentlemen? It is the gravest symptom of religious apathy that has yet been given in our age! You are more advanced in philosophical religion than ourselves. The choice of your orator is a confession: the Middle Ages are dead, and it is you who place the last stone on their tomb. Why do you talk of resuscitating them?

Maréchal — Bravo! bravo! I'd give a hundred thousand francs out of my own pocket to throw that in the teeth of the wire-puller that's taken my place!

Giboyer — The fact is, these gentlemen have been guying you cruelly.

Maréchal — It's an indignity!

Giboyer — A hoax. They are playing you for a sucker.

Maréchal — I'll let them see if I am one!

Giboyer — They are covering you with ridicule so you shan't dare show yourself again.

Maréchal — They'll find they've caught a Tartar.

Giboyer — Unluckily, you can't do anything against them.

Maréchal — I don't know about that!

Giboyer [*in a low voice*] — There would be one fine revenge to take on them.

Maréchal — What's that?

Giboyer — To answer the speech.

Maréchal — Me?

Giboyer — Strike them with lightning.

Maréchal — Oh, if I could!

Giboyer — Nothing is wanting but the lightning — and that can be got for you.

Maréchal — Who by, you?

Giboyer — No, I haven't force enough. I don't know but one man able to confute my speech: that is my nephew.

Maréchal — Little Gérard?

Giboyer — Same.

Maréchal — But he found it irrefutable!

Giboyer — He has thought it over since then, and demolished it to me piece by piece. Shall I tell you? He has overthrown my ideas so thoroughly that I have abandoned the party, and am going to give in my resignation as editor-in-chief to-morrow.

Maréchal — Thunder! Maximilien has converted you that far? Why, then he can write me a speech that —

Giboyer [*kissing his fingers with a smack*] — Oh!

Maréchal — Will one night be enough for it?

Giboyer — Easy.

Maréchal — And I can read it to-morrow?

Giboyer — What a surprise for them!

Maréchal — Is your nephew discreet?

Giboyer — As much so as I am.

Maréchal — Nothing must be said about it! Neither to my wife, nor my daughter, nor anybody! And he must bring me his manuscript to-morrow morning.

Giboyer — A bargain.

Maréchal — What a revenge!

[*Reënters the drawing-room by door at right.*

Giboyer — There's a recruit the democracy won't be proud of. But pshaw! Maximilien's happiness must be assured before everything.

Scene X.

Maximilien [*leaving the drawing-room by door at left*] — Are you coming?

Giboyer — You look like a drunken man.

Maximilien — I am.

Giboyer — To sober yourself up, you are going to pass the night in writing the refutation of Maréchal's speech. I'll furnish you the exordium.

Maximilien — What for?

Giboyer — I've got a deputy who lacks nothing but words.

Maximilien — It isn't I that will give them to him. I don't care for politics at present!

Giboyer — What! You don't hate opinions to which merit and honor are an insufficient dowry?

Maximilien — That's true.

Giboyer — Opinions that separate you from Fernande?

Maximilien — I execrate them!

Giboyer — You don't feel rage mounting in your heart before this stupid obstacle?

Maximilien — Yes!

Giboyer — You don't experience the need of hurling yourself on it and fastening your teeth in it?

Maximilien — You are right! Even though I break my teeth on it, I'll leave their print in the rock! Let us throw to the winds the protestation of despair, the dust-besprinkling of the vanquished! Come on!

Giboyer — Go and get your overcoat. [*Aside.*] As to me, I never wear one — it's too hot! [*They go out.*

ACT V.

Scene: same as Act II.

SCENE I.

Present: MME. MARÉCHAL, *seated in the center of the stage, embroidering;* FERNANDE, *going and coming in silence.*

Mme. Maréchal — You are much agitated, mademoiselle.

Fernande — And you are very calm, madame.

Mme. Maréchal — I have no reason for not being.

Fernande — When my father may be at the tribune this very moment!

Mme. Maréchal — Ah! that is what occupies you?

Fernande — And what then, madame? I admire your calmness.

Mme. Maréchal — Your father's speech is magnificent, and I am sure it will be a triumph.

Fernande — Oh, I don't ask as much as that.

Mme. Maréchal — I can believe it: he unfurls a flag that is not yours.

Fernande — I have no flag, madame: I do not mix in politics.

Mme. Maréchal — You surprise me: I should have believed you republican at heart.

Fernande — Why?

Mme. Maréchal — It is an opinion which brings the distant near together.

Fernande — I don't understand you.

Mme. Maréchal — Do you still play the guileless after yesterday's outbreak?

Fernande — Outbreak? There is no one but you, madame, to interpret ill so simple an action. I am sure that everybody in their hearts approved me, beginning with M. d'Outreville, who is most interested in the question.

Mme. Maréchal — If you fancy you enchanted him with your little manifestation! I have still to understand why he did not revoke his word.

Fernande — If I suspected him of having thought for an instant of doing so, I would revoke my own.

Mme. Maréchal — You are severe!

Fernande — I do not admit that he doubts my integrity.

A Servant — Is madame at home?
Mme. Maréchal — Who to?
Servant — Her Ladyship the Baroness Pfeffers!
Fernande [*aside*] — Again?
Mme. Maréchal — Show her in.

Scene II.

Mme. Maréchal [*showing the* Baroness *to a seat*] — Do you know, Baroness, you are spoiling us?

Baroness [*standing*] — Alas, madame! I am here to-day much against my will, charged with a mission which will certainly not surprise you, but the painful duty of which belonged rather to M. d'Auberive than to me. M. d'Outreville judged otherwise, and despite my repugnance to meddle in such delicate matters, I was compelled to yield to his entreaties.

Mme. Maréchal — He revokes his word? [*To* Fernande.] There! what did I tell you? There is the fruit of your eccentricities! After that scene of yesterday, this rupture is a disaster for you!

Baroness — Let us not exaggerate, madame: Mlle. Fernande's situation remains intact. M. d'Outreville, like a true gentleman, shrank from a rupture such that it might give rise to interpretations unpleasant for his fiancée; but M. Maréchal's speech has removed all his scruples.

Fernande — My father has made his speech?

Baroness — Yes, mademoiselle. It was on leaving the Chamber that M. d'Outreville hastened to me, indignant at that unqualified somersault.

Fernande — Somersault!

Baroness — What would you call it? I admit that M. Maréchal was galled, that he refused to comprehend the reasons of profound suitability which determined the committee to make choice of another orator —

Mme. Maréchal — Another orator! what do you mean?

Baroness — Didn't you know they withdrew the speech from him to give it to M. d'Aigremont?

Mme. Maréchal — Why, we are made a laughing-stock of, madame!

Fernande — But you say my father did speak.

Baroness — Alas ! yes. He rose after M. d'Aigremont, to the great surprise of our friends, and, to their still greater indignation, read a passionate reply to the noble words we had just heard.

Mme. Maréchal — How shocking ! Then we are under the ban of opinion !

Baroness — I am afraid so, madame. M. d'Outreville left the sitting, he came to me: you know the rest.

Fernande — Tell him, madame, that there was no need of his demanding back his promise: my father has given it to him.

Baroness — That response is worthy of you, mademoiselle. Adieu, madame. I share, believe me, in the grief which the conduct of M. Maréchal causes you. [*Aside.*] In one month I shall wear azure with three golden byzants.

Enter MARÉCHAL.

Fernande [*putting her arms around his neck*] — Father !

[MARÉCHAL *bows graciously to the* BARONESS, *who sweeps out without looking at him.*]

SCENE III.

Maréchal [*to* FERNANDE] — Where's the Baroness going with that insulted-princess air ?

Mme. Maréchal — Do *you* ask that ? —

Maréchal — Oh, so you know already ? Well, so much the better !

Mme. Maréchal — Apostate !

[FERNANDE *goes to work at her tapestry.*

Maréchal — Very fine, Madame Maréchal ! If there's been any apostasy on my part, it was the day I abandoned my ancestors' principles, and not the day I returned to them. I am a pure plebeian, even if you don't know it !

Mme. Maréchal — Ah ! if I could ever have doubted it —

Maréchal — My name isn't even a name, it's a nickname: I have a marshal [*farrier*] among my ancestors — not a marshal of France, do you understand ? but a blacksmith marshal. You're free to blush for it ; as for me, I'm proud of it.

Mme. Maréchal — Good Heavens ! what I exposed myself to by a misalliance !

Maréchal — Let me alone with your misalliance! You are a De la Vertpillière just as much as I am a palace official.

Mme. Maréchal — Sir!

Maréchal — Your name is Robillard [*shyster*]; your great-grandfather was an attorney.

Mme. Maréchal — Sir! sir! at least respect my family —

Maréchal — Madame, it isn't respectable. — I only esteem you the more in other respects: I have no prejudices myself. I despise the nobility: the only distinction I admit between men is that of fortune.

Mme. Maréchal — If you despise the nobility, they return it in full. Count d'Outreville has already sent word by the Baroness that he will not marry the daughter of a demagogue.

Maréchal — Indeed! He'll no longer do me the honor of pocketing my shillings, this frayed-out lordling? His Lordship the Count d'Outreville breaks his pledges to me? He discharges me from his alliance? What a coincidence! I was going to send in my resignation to him.

Mme. Maréchal — Ah! your language, sir, sinks with your sentiments: you grow vulgar.

Maréchal — I speak right straight out, as becomes a freeman. Far from me be the affectation of courts:

"I am one of the people, and so are my loves —"

without offense to you, Mlle. Robillard.

Mme. Maréchal — You are a revolutionary, a savage, that's what you are!

Maréchal — Come now, you make me laugh! That's all the effect that ought to be produced on true strength by the transports of weakness.

Mme. Maréchal [*going*] — I yield you the place, sir.

Maréchal — Go back to your woman's sphere, and stay there from now on. [*She stalks wrathfully out.*

Scene IV.

Maréchal [*going and sitting down beside* Fernande's *work*] — A'n't you going to say anything to me, girlie? Are you mourning over D'Outreville? Were you in love with him?

Fernande — No, father: it was a marriage of arrangement.

Maréchal — He's no beauty, that fellow isn't. I don't know how I ever came to think of giving a handsome girl like you to that spindle-shanked lord. Make yourself easy, you won't lack suitors with your fortune and — your father's glory.

Fernande — Then you made a great success?

Maréchal [*modestly*] — Enormous, child! One the like of hasn't been seen for ten years. Ah! those committee fellows must be gnawing their fingers for having taken that speech away from me! I just pulverized it! You'll read in the *Moniteur* to-morrow morning. You a'n't a Legitimist yourself, I hope?

Fernande — I am nothing; but I was surprised that you should be one, for you had no reason to be.

Maréchal [*rising*] — I wasn't one at heart. I foolishly allowed myself to be stuffed with it by your stepmother and that infernal Marquis; I believed in a possible alliance between the old aristocracy and the new: but the bandage has fallen from my eyes.

Fernande [*taking his arm tenderly*] — Whatever it is, I am very happy in your success, and very happy above all that it is over.

Maréchal — Over? This is only the beginning! All the orators of the other party are set down for to-morrow. They are going to deliver a sharp assault on me; but they don't know who they are dealing with! It will be my turn day after to-morrow: my friends count on me; I won't fail them.

Servant [*announcing*] — M. de Boyergi!

Maréchal — Tell him to come in. Leave us now, Fernande: we want to have a talk.

[*Kisses her on the forehead; she goes out.*

Scene V.

Enter Giboyer.

Maréchal — Well, my dear Boyergi, have you come to look for my thanks?

Giboyer — I bring you my congratulations.

Maréchal — I accept them, by jingo! But a good share of them ought to go back to your nephew, do you hear? he has rendered my ideas admirably, much better than I could have done myself; I don't pretend he hasn't.

Giboyer — You are too modest.

Maréchal — No, my dear fellow, I am merely just. That young man will go a long ways, — it's me that's telling you, and you can believe me; I'm posted there. I want to attach him to me and charge myself with his fortunes.

Giboyer — Thank you very much, but I have other designs for him: I am taking him to America.

Maréchal — You are taking him?

Giboyer — Yes: I have accepted the conduct of a great paper in Philadelphia, and need the coöperation of Maximilien.

Maréchal — But, good Lord! me too — I need him; I need him worse than you! I have a great position to sustain, a great cause to defend.

Giboyer — You are big enough for that task.

Maréchal — I don't know about that! That young man is extremely useful to me, I don't deny it.

Giboyer — Useful, yes; indispensable, no.

Maréchal — Pardon me! I am used to his way of working, he is used to mine; he completes me, he is my right arm, it's he that holds my pen. I am satisfied with his style and I don't want to change. — And then, I like the boy! I want to form him under my eyes, in my school. Where'll he find an apprenticeship equal to what he'll get with me?

Giboyer — That isn't the question.

Maréchal — Then what is it? Is it about salary? Fix it yourself. What will he earn in America? I'll double it for him.

Giboyer — Good Heavens, sir —

Maréchal — Wants his independence? He shall have it! nobody shall know he belongs to me — I'd just as lieves! See here, if you have the least interest in him, you ought to accept my offers. They are fine!

Giboyer — So fine that I can only excuse my rejection by telling you the whole truth. I am taking Maximilien with me above all to get him abroad, to tear him away from a hopeless love affair.

Maréchal — He is in love? O Lord, the beautiful misfortune! We've all been there, and there we are!

Giboyer — It's not a flirtation, sir: it's a passion.

Maréchal — Who for? a girl he can't marry?

Giboyer — Just so.

Maréchal — What the deuce runs away with these youngsters? [*Aside.*] And my reply speech — day after to-morrow. [*Aloud.*] When do you sail?

Giboyer — To-morrow evening.

Maréchal — Give me a week, anyhow.

Giboyer — Not a day, sir: they are waiting for me.

Maréchal — Hang it! Couldn't there be any means of arranging that cursed marriage?

Giboyer — It is so impossible that I don't even wish it.

Maréchal — Family have their noses 'way up in the air, I suppose? For after all, your nephew is charming in person; he has a magnificent future, a most acceptable present, since I give him — Yes, I'll go as high as twenty thousand francs. Why, devil take it! it's a superb position. What is it those fools must have?

Giboyer — If I told you the young lady's name, you wouldn't insist.

Maréchal — A Montmorency, I conclude?

Giboyer — Better than that, sir! To tell it all in a word, it is Mlle. Fernande.

Maréchal [*very stiffly*] — My daughter? — My secretary permits himself to lift his eyes to my daughter?

Giboyer — No sir, because he is going to America.

Maréchal — Pleasant voyage! She is not meat for him, my dear sir.

Giboyer [*bowing as to take leave*] — I know it. May she be happy with Count d'Outreville.

Maréchal — D'Outreville? Hm — yes! — That's one more obligation I owe you! Everything is broken off, thanks to the attitude you got me to take.

Giboyer [*aside*] — I suspected as much.

Maréchal [*striding about agitatedly*] — My poor child! And the marriage announced, too! the wedding presents bought, the banns published! How can I marry her off at present? And all your fault, sir.

Giboyer [*immovable and cold*] — That rupture was hardly weighing on your mind when I came.

Maréchal — Alas! I counted on my glory to repair the effect. My glory! another heartbreak! You give me over defenseless to the enemies you have made for me! I am the red rag to a

powerful and rancorous party! The jokes will just rain on my silence. I can do nothing but retire from the political scene, and go to planting cabbages. The disaster is complete! the father is compromised even worse than the daughter!

[*Sits down at right.*

Giboyer — Pshaw! a rich heiress is never compromised enough not to find a husband.

Maréchal [*dejectedly*] — Yes, some penniless fop who will take her money and make her unhappy.

Giboyer — That's true, you are right — I didn't think of that. A disinterested young man who would marry her for herself — that's a rare bird. And then, supposing you did put your hand on him, your daughter would be relieved from embarrassment — but not you.

Maréchal — Good Lord!

Giboyer — At least, unless your son-in-law had capacity enough to replace my nephew with you; and that can't be found now in the twinkling of a sheep's tail.

Maréchal — Who are you talking to?

Giboyer — Besides, there are enough men already in the secret of your work.

Maréchal — Too many.

Giboyer — How can we get out of this blind alley?

Maréchal [*striking his forehead*] — What dunces we are! why, that shows for itself. [*Goes to fireplace and rings bell.*]

Giboyer [*aside*] — With a little help.

Maréchal [*aside, coming forward*] — It will do me the greatest honor. Besides, I can't do anything else. [*To* Servant.] Ask Mademoiselle to come and speak to me.

Giboyer — You have an idea?

Maréchal — It's never ideas I lack, my dear fellow, it's style. I'm going to astonish you.

Giboyer — What do you think of doing?

Maréchal — Never mind. You'd never guess. Men that conform their words to their acts are rare: I am one. — I am all of a piece, I am — square set: what I think, I say; what I say, I do.

Giboyer [*aside*] — Queer what a smart fellow I am when the business doesn't concern me.

Enter FERNANDE.

Maréchal — My daughter —

Giboyer [*aside*] — There she is!

Maréchal — I present to you M. de Boyergi, uncle of Maximilien. — Do you know what he has just been telling me now? His nephew's departure for America.

Fernande — Going away? he told me nothing about it.

Giboyer — It is a resolution of this morning, mademoiselle.

Fernande — Won't he come and say good-bye to us?

Giboyer — He has very little time to himself; he charged me with presenting his compliments.

Fernande — Then he does not think us very great friends of his? Tell him, sir, that I should have been glad to take his hand, and that I wish him all the happiness he is so worthy of.

Maréchal — The very question is about his happiness! Do you know the cause of this desperate resolution? The gentleman didn't want to tell me; but they can't hide anything from me. The poor youth is going away to forget you.

Fernande — To forget me? [*To* GIBOYER.] Be assured, sir, that I have not been guilty of any coquetry. Chance alone has bred between us a species of intimacy which I regret profoundly, since there could spring from it for M. Gérard anything but friendship.

Maréchal — That's all well and good, but the harm is done. Ah, well, this distresses me. I set the greatest store by that young man, for my part. He is a boy of rare merit, and an elevation of sentiments rarer still.

Fernande — You do him no more justice than I.

Maréchal — He is poor — so much the better! In short, it depends only on you whether he shall be my son-in-law. [*To* GIBOYER.] You weren't expecting that, hey? [*To* FERNANDE.] Well, do you accept?

Fernande — Yes, father.

Giboyer — Oh, mademoiselle, I will hurry and apprise him —

A Servant [*announcing*] — M. Gérard!

Giboyer — Oh, these lovers! — he was going to leave without seeing you again!

Maréchal [*low*] — Sh! let me do it! [*Seats himself on the fauteuil in the middle of the stage;* FERNANDE *standing behind him.*] Let him come in!

Scene VII.

Giboyer [*to* Maximilien, *who stops, a little confused, on seeing him*] — Well, yes, it's I.

Maximilien [*to* Maréchal] — I see, sir, that I have not to announce my departure to you. I have come to take leave of you and — your family.

Maréchal [*pretending severity*] — My family, sir, applauds your resolution all the more that she knows the true cause.

Maximilien [*to* Giboyer] — What is the meaning —

Giboyer [*joyfully*] — I have made full confession.

Maximilien — What right had you to give up my secret?

Maréchal — It isn't his fault: I rooted it out of him, if I may venture to express myself so. Ah, my buck, so you permit yourself to love my daughter! There's nothing shrinking about you.

Maximilien — Sir —

Maréchal [*rising*] — Well! I — I give her to you.

Maximilien — Oh, sir! this chaff—

Giboyer — He isn't chaffing!

Maximilien [*in great emotion*] — What, sir, you consent! And you, mademoiselle, in spite of my poverty!

Maréchal — Your merit is a fortune.

Maximilien — In spite of my birth!

Giboyer [*aside, in consternation*] — I forgot that!

Maréchal — Why, what is there in particular about your birth?

Maximilien — Don't you know? I only bear my mother's name.

Maréchal — What! How? No father! [*To* Giboyer.] And you didn't say anything about it?

Giboyer — Oh dear! I never thought of it!

Maréchal — You never thought of it, thunderation! you ought to have thought of it. If I defy prejudices, I respect them — and for society —

Giboyer — For society, my nephew is an orphan, and nobody will take the trouble to verify his civil status.

Maréchal — Well, that's a fact. Nobody'll verify it — and then, it's an enormous advantage to marry an orphan. You only have to marry your husband, not his family!

Maximilien — Pardon me, sir: I have my father.

Giboyer [*quickly*] — That's no matter: he has no rights over Maximilien, as he didn't acknowledge him.

Maximilien — If he has no rights before the law, he has them in his heart. Do you understand?

Maréchal [*to* GIBOYER] — Who is this father, anyway? What's he called?

Maximilien — Giboyer.

Maréchal — Giboyer? The biographer, the pamphleteer?

Giboyer [*bowing his head*] — Yes.

Maréchal [*to* MAXIMILIEN] — But, my dear fellow, to such a father you owe nothing before either God or man. You are very lucky that he *hasn't* hobbled you with his name —

Maximilien [*with a burst of feeling*] — It is on that account that he has not acknowledged me, and not to relieve himself of the duties of paternity. He has accomplished *them* with a superhuman abnegation. He has squandered his body and his soul for me. Let him be judged as he may: I am his virtue, and it is not for me to deny him! He has not acknowledged me, but I acknowledge him; for he has legitimized himself by devotion.

Giboyer [*in a trembling voice*] — If he heard you, he would be richly paid! but let him complete his task! Since he has consecrated his life to make yours smooth, do not inflict this sorrow on him, the only one he has never foreseen — that of becoming an obstacle himself; do not refuse him the bitter pleasure of the last sacrifice. [*To* MARÉCHAL, *in a firm voice.*] I promise you in his name, sir, that he shall disappear, he shall go away — very far.

Maximilien — Where he goes, I will go; it is my duty, it is my joy. I will not separate him from the only man who has the right to surround his old age with respect and kneel beside his death-bed.

Maréchal — Those sentiments do you honor, but they are absurd, a'n't they, M. de Boyergi? [*Walks to center of stage.*

Giboyer — Yes.

Maréchal — Are you crying? Well, good Lord, do you suppose I'm not feeling emotion myself? I am that! I do justice to that fine fellow, Giboyer, and I'd be very glad to shake hands with him — in a corner; but I can't associate with him when there'll be the devil to pay. [*Walking to the left.*] Don't ask the impossible of me.

Maximilien — I ask nothing, sir.

Maréchal [*aside*] — That's a common way of getting everything: I know all about it. [*Aloud.*] I give you fair warning I've come to the end of my concessions. Choose between your father, since a father there is — and my daughter.

Maximilien — But, sir, I have no right even to deliberate.

Giboyer — I beg of you, do not disquiet yourself about him. You do not know those fierce devotions that repay themselves. Come, the sweetest companion you can give to his old age is the thought that you are happy.

Maximilien — The more he would pardon my ingratitude, the less I should pardon myself! — No!

Giboyer [*sadly*] — Don't let us talk any more about it.

Maréchal [*crossly*] — Don't let us talk any more about it. Go to America, and much good may it do you! You don't love my daughter, that's all.

Maximilien [*falling with a sob on the fauteuil in the center*] — I don't love her!

Maréchal [*in the doorway*] — Come, Fernande. [FERNANDE, *who has followed the whole scene from the rear, advances slowly toward* MAXIMILIEN, *and taking his face between her hands, kisses him on the forehead. Then she holds her head up and gazes at her father.*] Are you mad? Fine fix I'm in now! You triumph, sir, you are master of the situation; nothing is left for you to do except to escort M. Giboyer into my house and install him in my dressing-gown.

Fernande [*to* GIBOYER] — I should be very happy, sir, to have you call me your daughter.

Maréchal — What? is it he?

Fernande — Didn't you guess it?

[*Gives her hands to* GIBOYER, *who covers them with kisses.*

Maréchal — Why, then there's nothing changed in the situation — that I accepted. What I ask of you, M. de Boyergi, is not to change anything in it.

Giboyer — I have no desire to do so.

Maréchal [*aside*] — I shall have two secretaries instead of one.

Giboyer [*aside*] — All the same, I shall go to America after the marriage.

A Servant [*announcing*] — His Lordship the Marquis d'Auberive!

Scene VIII.

Enter the Marquis.

Maréchal — Come in, Marquis, and be the first to learn of your ward's marriage.

Marquis [*looking at the lovers*] — To M. Gérard? I oppose it.

Maréchal — Oh! Indeed! You oppose it? By what right? I am my daughter's father, I suppose?

Marquis — Very true, but do you know who this gentleman is?

Fernande — I love him!

Marquis [*aside*] — Balderdash! — But no! [*Aloud.*] Gad! I've wonted myself to the idea that you would marry one of my class, my dear Fernande, and at my age one doesn't change his habits any more. — Young man, you are an orphan — by the resolve of the father of the family; I have no children; I have given you the attentions required by the Code: I adopt you.

Maréchal — Hey?

Giboyer — I thank you from the bottom of my heart, my Lord Marquis.

Maximilien — I too, I thank you very much: but I am not used to having a great many fathers; I have found a good one, and I'll stop there.

Marquis — Take care! It's greatness of soul at Fernande's expense.

Fernande — That nobility is enough for me.

Marquis [*to* Maréchal] — It seems to me you might be consulted a little.

Maréchal — It would be only the proper thing, and I confess I should be enchanted to have my son-in-law — Ah, but no! Ah, but no! I am a democrat.

Giboyer [*aside*] — He thinks he is.

Marquis — Well, since you're all losing your wits — [*Aside.*] I'll adopt my grandson!

THE ESSENCE OF GIBOYER.

A Retort to "Giboyer's Son."

By LOUIS VEUILLOT.

(Translated for this work by Forrest Morgan.)

[Louis Veuillot was the most brilliant French journalist of this century who remained a journalist, and the Ishmaelite champion of reactionism in every part of national life, — religion, politics, and society; so uncompromising, so thorough-going, and so equally bitter in his assaults on liberal outsiders and the moderates of his own party, that the latter at last had to tie his hands in self-defense. He was born in 1813, the son of a cooper near Orleans, who moved to Paris and set up a small wine-shop when Louis was five, gave the boy a "mutual school" education, and at thirteen put him into a lawyer's office. Here he read bad novels and attended cheap theaters till literary ambition awoke in him; he set resolutely to work at genuine study and good reading, till at nineteen he got a utility place on a newspaper, and was shortly set to conducting a ministerial journal, where he distinguished himself as a sharp-tongued polemic writer, and fought one duel for politics and another for a theatrical criticism. The same year he went to Perigueux as chief editor of another paper, remained four years, and fought more duels. In 1837 he returned to Paris, and edited other short-lived papers. The next year he took a casual journey to Italy, reached Rome during Holy Week, and saw the Pope. It settled the purpose and action of his career: till then a mere journalistic free-lance, he thenceforth devoted his existence to upholding the papal authority and pretensions doctrinal and practical, like a second Loyola, and the Catholic doctrines *à outrance* against liberty, science, and reason; with amazing fertility and variety both of idea and expression, keen and venomous wit, and often a note straight from the heart that went to others'. He wrote several religious books the next two years, and even hymns. In 1842 he went to Algeria with General Bugeaud, an experience which produced "The French in Algeria" (1844). On his return he was made head clerk to the Ministry of the Interior; but after eighteen months left it to take (1843) his most famous position, that of an editor of *L'Univers*, the chief organ of the Clerical party. It was not till 1848 that he became its nominal head, De Coux filling that place; but his power was felt from the first. *In re* the Cambalot bill for liberty of teaching, he declared mortal war on the universities, and got some months in prison. In 1847 he supported fiercely the cause of the seceding Swiss Catholic cantons, the "Sonderbund." The Revolution of 1848 he first hailed and then fought, like many others not reactionists. He now became more ultra than ever, and disturbed even the mass of his own party by his virulence. At last denouncing even the Catholic prelates who defended the study of the classics, — which he fought as paganizing, — he was reproved and ordered to keep silence on the question by the Archbishop of Paris; but he went to Rome and gained personal permission from the Pope to continue. The bishops of several dioceses, however, prohibited their clergy from reading his paper. In the burning question of the temporal power of the papacy, 1859–1861, he defended it so bitterly that the paper was suppressed as a public danger; in a few days it reappeared under the name of *Le Monde*, but Veuillot was out, and remained so for six years. He went to Rome again, and was embroiled afresh with the government. Back at the head of the paper in 1867, he had

lost none of his uncompromisingness nor his venom. At the approach of the Ecumenical Council of 1869, he redoubled his assaults on lukewarm supporters of papal infallibility, and of the adoption of Pius IX.'s syllabus of eighty heresies as articles of faith; and as a lay attendant at the early sessions of the council was formidable enough to overawe many even of the lower clergy. He continued active for many years after this, and died in 1883. His literary activity was by no means wholly polemic: he wrote very many brilliant sketches of character and life and nature, collected as "Mélanges," "Odors of Paris," "The Free-Thinkers," etc., in numerous volumes; two very readable novels, "Corbin and D'Aubécourt" (1850), a religious romance, and "The Honest Woman," hardly defined by its title; "The Plaits" (1844), short stories, and "Here and There" (1859), sketches and impressions; "The *Droit du Seigneur*" (1854), an antiquarian treatise of real value; and others. The one which follows explains itself. In one regard, Augier's attack was certainly unjust: Veuillot was no hireling condottière. A man who serves but one cause for half a century, and that not the one with glory, fortune, or popular applause to offer, serves it as well in its long defeats as its brief triumphs, and as well when abandoned and discredited by its chiefs as when favored and honored by them, — such a man, even though compelled by poverty to take wages, may be anything else one pleases, may be hopelessly in the wrong as to both principles and judgment, but he is assuredly not a mercenary.]

Argument by the Author.

A short analysis of "Giboyer's Son" is necessary for the understanding of the dialogue which follows. Here it is: —

The Marquis d'Auberive, a more than septuagenarian scapegrace, one of the chiefs of the Legitimist and Catholic party, occupies himself in organizing the *Clerical* party, which is composed of Legitimists, Orleanists, and Imperialists, "united in hate or fear of democracy." He forms at the same time three projects which are linked with his political plan: First, he wants to give a husband to Mlle. Fernande Maréchal, daughter of a Clerical-Voltairian deputy, a rich fool, whose first wife — of whom Fernande is the daughter — he professes to have seduced. Secondly, he wants to give an editor-in-chief to the principal Clerical journal, his personal organ, to replace Déodat, who has just died. Thirdly, he wants to give the Clerical party a dazzling orator, who is to begin by a speech on the Roman question.

For Mlle. Maréchal he designs a poor relation, the young Count d'Outreville, whom he brings expressly from the County, and who is to be his heir. For the paper he designs the illustrious Giboyer, actually employed in the undertaking line and at the theater in Lyons. For the tribune he designs Maréchal, the putative father of Fernande; Giboyer will write his speeches for him, which will be paid extra.

The septuagenarian Marquis sneers at everything: his living friends, his dead mistresses, his political party, his religious party, and even his daughter's happiness and honor; for as soon as he has

seen the husband he intends to furnish her with, he declares him a blockhead and a craven, and that trifle does not hinder him from persisting. In the author's idea, the Marquis is the personification of the old nobility; he is the shadow which augments the resplendence of the new nobility personified in Giboyer, frankly a blackguard, but full of sublime aspirations, wise, eloquent, devoted, — in a word, a democrat, and the ancestor of the future.

Unluckily for the plans of the Marquis d'Auberive, Giboyer has a pseudonymous son, a charming and delicious bastard, born of free love with a folder-girl, and who is beloved by the bastard Fernande Maréchal, as ravishing as he. Further, to form and rule the Clerical party the Marquis has procured to assist him an adventuress named the Baroness Sophie Pfeffers, and this lady finds the Count d'Outreville such a precious greenhorn that she resolves to marry him.

The Baroness Pfeffers is the feminine pendant to the Marquis d'Auberive. She personifies the ladies of the supreme Catholic aristocracy, the patronesses of pious works, the true heads who according to the author conduct the religious and political intrigues of the Faubourg St. Germain. She has for a reflection in the bourgeois world Mme. Maréchal, wife of the Voltairian deputy who is about to become the orator of the Clerical party, thanks to what Giboyer furnishes him. Like her stepdaughter Fernande, Mme. Maréchal is greatly taken with the young Giboyer, but he scorns her.

The junior Giboyer, pupil of his unknown father, has none but virtuous inclinations. He is the democratic contrast which makes the dull stupidity of the Count d'Outreville — wretched scion of the old nobility, and pupil of M. de Sainte-Agathe, assuredly a Jesuit, though he does not call himself one — stand out in relief. As to the deputy Maréchal, he represents the Voltairian and Papist, and perhaps the Orleanist and Imperialist, bourgeoisie. In the play he is the only person in whom these diverse opinions can equally concur. At bottom, nevertheless, he is nothing but a democrat; and I do not understand why the author dresses him in yellow, and heaps so many gibes on him, since he is one of his own men. Perhaps he wanted to personify the rare and absurd personage who is called the Opposition deputy.

The love of Fernande Maréchal, the secret daughter of the new principle, for the junior Giboyer, a patent product of the same principle, and the ambition of the Baroness Pfeffers, who needs to be a countess, frustrate the combinations of the old Marquis and overthrow all his plans. Maréchal, deprived of his position as Catholic orator to the profit of the Protestant D'Aigremont, marries his daughter to Giboyer's son, who will write Voltairian speeches for him. Giboyer senior, to whom this marriage assures a living, retires

from the Clerical infamy and returns to the political and religious sentiments natural to him. The Clerical paper no longer has an editor-in-chief, and will find itself suppressed without a decree. The Count d'Outreville is disinherited, and moreover marries the Baroness: a double and just punishment for having been trained by M. Sainte-Agathe. The Marquis d'Auberive will find heirs in the posterity of Giboyer junior. And the democracy, crowned with the flowers of Hymen, and fattened by the dollars of the democracy and the ducats of the aristocracy, triumphs all along the line.

This composition is enhanced by a short preface, written in a singularly heavy, incorrect, and oblique style. The public was indeed surprised, for the dialogue is not lacking in ease, and skips around briskly enough. In this preface the author makes denial on several points. He explains, or rather asserts, that the piece is *social* and not *political;* that "the antagonism of the ancient principle and the modern principle" is its "entire subject"; and that its true title should be "The Clericals," "if that *vocable* (wholly political) were in theatrical currency." In a word, he plays the triply amusing character of a moralist who does not know what he is doing, a politician who does not know what he wants, and an Academician who does not know what he is saying. He has put nothing so truly comic in his entire play, where moreover abound heavy odors, false harmonies, Sardinian honey, and all that is noted as most proper to spoil a feast of wit: —

"Symphonia discors,
Et crassum unguentum, et Sardo cum melle papaver —"

This is the famous "Fils de Giboyer," which is proposed and even imposed for the admiration of the subjects of the S. M. I. As a literary work, no one save Sarcey alone finds it hard to admit that it is poor; as a moral work, there is general agreement that it is sordid; as a political work, it is pretty nearly recognized to be flat. But as a financial speculation, few authors have made out as happily for a long time; and as a work of public disorganization, its efficacy is manifest.

We shall examine it from the triple view-point of literature, morals, and politics. We shall explain why all this shabby, all this bad, and all this ill-bred stuff, crowned with such great success, is not more unworthy of attention; we shall try particularly to discover the strange sources whence spreads a sincere admiration for mediocre and even bad productions. "Giboyer's Son" is a document of some historic value; it deserves a commentary.

I greatly fear I am losing my time. What can morality flatter itself to-day on saying with utility? And above all, what does it matter to the happy father of "Giboyer"? Just now, in the middle of the street, I put myself that question. I found myself in the

midst of a block of vehicles. Hacks, turnouts, dump-carts, were interlocked; it was raining; the mud was splashing over the cumbered pavements. A lady, richly and nobly dressed, jumped out in terror from her barouche, wheel-caught by an omnibus; received a fresh shove, slipped, and fell sprawling in the gutter. Everybody saw it, and the pleasure was general. They laughed at the doors of shops, they laughed in the cabs, they laughed in the interior and on the tops of omnibuses; the street urchins hooted, the flunkeys jubilated, the driver who had given the shove exulted; the police almost alone, fettered by duty, tried to hold in their good humor. The poor lady endeavored to hide her mud and her mortification in a shop; the mob crowded around it, suffocating with laughter. I was witnessing a representation of "Giboyer." What was the use of protesting? What could you say to that guffawing rabble?

No matter! I have nothing to do, and there is no lack in France of unoccupied people like me. "Giboyer" has been given us to look at for a distraction: let us go in there, and hiss as much as permitted.

Let us grant ourselves the pastime of seeing whether these omnibus drivers can blush.

INTERLOCUTORS.

THE MARQUIS, ex-ambassador, aged 71.
M. D'AIGREMONT, former peer of France, aged 60.
M. COUTURIER, ex-deputy, aged 55.
THE COUNT, pontifical soldier, aged 25.
MAXIMILIEN, the MARQUIS' footman.

Scene: A Paris drawing-room.

Marquis — Calm yourself, nephew. I have read this fulminating "Giboyer." It lacks virtue in every sense of the word, including "the current sense." It is nothing but what the "Song of Roland" calls a "baron's blow": there are only two or three months of it.

Count — Two or three months of pillory for honest people, uncle.

Marquis — May they always get off as well, nephew! We pass our days in that pillory! Do you no longer recall being hooted by all the enlightened youth of the County, by reason of your good manners? Weren't you a little discredited for being a member of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, a little deprived of your civil rights for being a soldier of the Pope? You wish to be an upright man, and you aspire to have comedy honor you!

D'Aigremont — Youthful chimeras!

Marquis — My old friends D'Aigremont and Couturier there, Déodat, Mme. de Pfeffers, all my worthy intimates, I have never ceased to view in some pillory, and myself with them. The newspaper, the caricature, the theater, live upon us. Remain a man of spirit, and you will learn to know Giboyer's industries and justices. It is he who hisses us, who hounds on the pit, who brands us with the hot iron of his genius. Unless indeed he is in our houses, as parasite or lackey; then he flatters us, betrays us, and plunders us. But once more, the Giboyer of the day is not strong and will not go far.

Count — I think you are mistaken, uncle. You haven't seen the spectacle, — the insolence of the stage, the noisy satisfaction of the audience. I came out indignant and afflicted: indignant, for the work is unrighteous; afflicted, because it is full of wit.

Marquis — Indignation may pass: it is natural at your age. Certain things ought not to find you patient yet. But that the wit which appears in the play should afflict you, gives me pain. It has no wit at all, or I am no longer a judge.

Couturier — You are an excellent judge, Marquis, and yet it has.

Marquis — Tell the marines! My nephew smells of his province, and my old friend Couturier is one of those serious people whom gross buffoonery surprises and doubles up. They can be amused with puns. You, Couturier, and this little soldier, you are innocents. You let yourself be taken in by the mordant voice of the comedian who makes platitudes vibrate by his grimace which tickles the galleries.

Couturier — Perhaps. In my youth, when managing a household, I always received bad money. At the theater, kicks always made me laugh, and I always cried when the long-lost child recognized its father; and I have had for a servant this twenty years, under different names and with different faces, the same scamp, without ever recognizing him till after he had robbed me.

Marquis — It was no fault of mine.

Couturier — No. I hear you yet: "Couturier, take care! you are intrusting your keys to Master Laurent, good Master Tartufe's valet." But how is one to recognize Laurent, when he presents himself under the name of Dubois? Oh, I confess my weaknesses. As one of my old political friends said, I let myself be taken in by all the regular tricks. For all that, I

have noticed in "Giboyer" many sharp-pointed phrases, that fly to the target and stick there like barbed arrows.

Marquis — As to phrases, everybody has made them, and every author picks them up. In a comedy, I want to see comic traits. Here there are phrases — not many! And of those few, a large part are picked up. He is a picker-up, this archer of yours.

D'Aigremont — Reclaimer, Marquis. He takes his own wherever he finds it.[1]

Marquis — Then his wealth is made up of skillful reclamation. I know where he reclaimed it from. Once a month I make a purchase of a few bundles of the minor journals. You know only one of them, often more literary and more courageously sensible than the great press: I know half a dozen. I see there whence the wit of the Athenians comes. Despite some flashes of sprightliness, it is hideous: it smells of the shoe in holes, the drink, the shameful hunger, and all the rest. Your man, my dear Couturier, fishes in that pond. Out of this tinsel and these odors he astonishes the good company. It mounts to the nose, it tingles, and they say, "It is very strong!" At the other end of the Palais-Royal, this style no longer rouses wonder: the vaudeville and the farce abuse it. Most of those fine phrases you speak of did not pass before me for the first time, by any means; but I abstained from bowing to them, because they are disreputable acquaintances.

D'Aigremont — Come, Marquis, you make me wish to play devil's advocate! Our author picks up in good places also, — he has read our friend Déodat. When Giboyer reveals his hidden glory, he announces that he has written a book "beautiful and true," of which he is proud, which he will not sign out of respect to the work. He adds, "If I will not sign my book, why should you expect me to sign my boy!" The phrase was found in "The Free-Thinkers," and Giboyer does not quite spoil it. But even when he merely draws water from the tub, how he filters and how he colors! The angelic Maximilien Giboyer, disengaging his democratic father from clerical servitude, says to him, putting his hand on his forehead: "I don't want you to debase any longer the great mind that is there. — My old friend, how you must have suffered vilifying your noble ideas in that *crabs' newspaper!* Quit it, I beg of you, — so that the gentlemen of the committee will have *noses a foot long* when

[1] Molière's famous defense when accused of plagiarism.

they wake up. How delightful to *waft away* their *slugger!*" You will admit there is delicacy here, and a fine patchwork of various old gags.

Marquis — And the true style of a young gentleman, distinguished by the expression as by the elevation of his sentiments! It is easy to understand the general favor with which the youthful Giboyer, the illegitimate son of a folder-girl, is the object, not alone in Maréchal's house, but up to the aristocratic drawing-room of the Baroness Sophie Pfeffers.

Couturier — Come, come, gentlemen, won't you accord anything to our Aristophanes? For, after all, he is Aristophanes, since Paris is Athens.

Marquis — Excellent Aristophanes of that Athens! Scribe was its Menander, and Ponsard its Sophocles. We are fine! Nevertheless, since an Aristophanes there is, I acknowledge one merit in our Aristophanes.

Couturier — Good. It becomes the vanquished to be just. Come, Marquis, describe the conqueror's merit.

Marquis — Guess it. I wish to check my impressions by yours.

Couturier — Observation?

Marquis — Nowise.

D'Aigremont — Invention?

Marquis — Not at all.

Count — Faith! as you have denied him wit and style already —

Marquis — Wit almost; style absolutely.

Count — Then do you accord him courage?

Marquis — Ah no, not that! not even audacity. Do you remember those police vocalists who dishonored the human voice and the street by bellowing out songs against Lamoricière?

Count — Yes, I remember them.

D'Aigremont — In fact, you owed them twenty-four hours in the lock-up.

Count — And you, sir, the trouble of getting me out of it, which was no small matter.

Couturier — It was your first stage on the road to Castelfidardo:[1] I do not commiserate you.

Marquis — Nor I, though he came near never returning.

[1] The battle of September 18, 1860, which put an end to the temporal power of the Pope, the Italians under Cialdini defeating the Papal troops under the French general Lamoricière.

Count — Nor I, uncle, though I did not remain there.

Marquis — Well, boy, these drunken rhapsodists that dared to insult the old African in a city full of his former comrades — a city once proud of his glory and not long ago saved by him — had they at least this low species of courage? Not a whit. They had their effrontery and a permission. All those who could feel the outrage had swallowed it without breathing a word.

Couturier — You don't mean it was just swagger?

Marquis — I say it was so. It needed the hare-brained skull of this little fanatic to conceive the illegal thought of oppressing one of Lamoricière's insulters. The insulter yelled for the guard; the sergeants snapped up the fanatic and ran him into the guard house. The case of the hunter[1] is similar: it is even more secure. He attacks only society, and he has his shooting license properly made out. No public prosecutor to fear, no comedy against him possible, no reprisals. At most a few pamphlets, which will help do his own work by keeping up the noise. Thus there is glory, money, security, and in addition, I presume, the peace of a good conscience: this is a soldier of ideas whom I do not see under the aspect of a hero.

Couturier — It is not like Molière or Beaumarchais.

Marquis — Yes indeed, it is just the same, minus the genius of Molière and the diabolic talent of Beaumarchais. Molière knew his court. Under pretext of assaulting hypocrites, he traduced the malcontents. He was given Louis XIV. for collaborator; he had Condé for ardent patron. Louis XIV. at that time was rather tired of the devotees, who busied themselves too much over Mme. de Montespan; Condé was playing free-thinker.

Couturier — Which does not prove that all free-thinkers are heroes.

Marquis — It is you who say that. Having made submission to the king, the former rebel amused himself by heckling God. Louis, on his part, readily treated as political opposition the overstrained devotion which blamed the prince's amusements. The good Catholic of the moment, the "sincere but independent" Catholic of 1662 to 1669, ought to admit public adultery, as to-day he ought to desire the annexation of the Papal States. Molière wrote his skit against the devotees; namely, "Tartufe." Later he wrote one directly in favor of annexation; namely, "Amphitryon."

[1] *Giboyeur* means a professional huntsman — hence, social free-lance.

Couturier — Curious likeness between Molière and an illustrious modern : both victims of anti-conjugal annexation, both determined annexationists ! Fine subject for a comedy — which will not be written.

Marquis — Molière had much likeness to all sorts of people who remain far below him. No one practiced more skillfully the pretended new art of the *puff*. The preparation of "Tartufe" was the work of a master in this line. He showed half of it, he tried it on society and the court ; never was a work in childbed accompanied by such uproar. The devotees cried out, — the "heart devotees," — as to-day honest people do, while the true Giboyers keep still. Molière called it calumny, invoked the King, invoked Condé, invoked the papal legate, averred that he was seeking only the interest of Heaven. In his heart he was laughing at everybody. "Quite sure of having not one of his masters against him," says his commentator Bret, "he did not lose courage." At last the piece was represented, and the author gave himself the pleasure of adding a preface, a masterpiece of wit and impertinent hypocrisy, in which he boasts of having rendered the greatest service to the cause of God, despite the respectable blindness of the true devotees who misunderstand its nature. He pretends to rely on the Fathers of the Church ; he cites M. de Corneille, and puts "Tartufe" in the same rank with "Polyeucte." If we could only be laughed at to-day in such good prose ! Alas ! poor Molière, poor great artist, dying without sacraments, in a player's gown ! His libel still endures. Tartufe, become a priest of Reason, demonstrates every day to Orgon, become a thinker, that Scapin was the most pious of apostles.

Couturier — One moment, my Lord Marquis ! If that arrow is for me, I declare it unrighteous. I let myself be taken in by all sorts of tricks ; but I have never believed that the good shopkeepers who demand "Tartufe," and the good actors who play it, were trying to hearten themselves up to take the Easter sacraments.

Marquis — My dear Couturier, all the wit in the world cannot preserve honest people from a certain credulity ; otherwise too many people would die of hunger. But there is a certain depth of silliness in credulity to which only the incredulous descend. It is in those that is venerated Saint Poquelin, prophet and martyr of the true piety.

D'Aigremont — I confess that I have never admired the

courage of Molière, any more than his depth as a moralist. He is a very adroit courtier, and a skillful observer of surfaces. If you sound him a little, you shortly come to find the tufa. He turned back equally where he saw that his masters were against him, and where the true depth of the human soul opened before him.

Marquis — Let us recognize also that the dramatic author, especially the comedian, is essentially a hampered person. He has always masters to satisfy, always an audience to attract. Justice exacts that we should not demand from him either too much virtue nor too much philosophy.

Count — But, gentlemen, Beaumarchais? If you tell me he was a scapegrace, I shall not rebel. A man of merit has written two fat volumes on his account, very amusing, which sufficiently make him out that. But at least here is a bold scapegrace, who pays with his hide. How he places himself in the open field, how he forms his sole person into a hollow square, everywhere bristling with darts, firing from every quarter!

Marquis — And firing on everything, — on the family, on marriage, on justice, on religion, on the nobility; no base of social order is spared.

Count — Well, uncle, that proves at least his audacity.

Marquis — No, nephew. It very simply demolishes your panegyric. When a society receives full in its face, I will not say such lessons, — it takes other lips to give lessons, — but such slaps, the man who delivers them risks nothing: that society has reached its term, and is making haste to perish. It applauds whoever shakes its decrepitude with a more pitiless arm, and rushes toward the abyss at a madder pace. The first edition of the "Marriage of Figaro" contains one particularly deadly feature, which is not the author's: that is the approbation of the censorship. "Nothing contrary to laws or morals," says the censorship, hissed itself like all other institutions. So your brilliant scapegrace had no need of so much hardihood. He was a very different thing from Sir Caron de Beaumarchais: he was the mob already triumphant, already dancing over the ruins. Count Almaviva, Countess Rosine, Judge Brid'oison, Citizen Bartholo, Churchman Basile, take hold of hands in an impious round. Figaro, the bastard, product, agent, minister, and victim, but not the innocent victim, of their corruptions, pitches the key of the tune and leads the dance. The democracy is born.

Couturier — Ah, that is quite true, Marquis. I had not thought of that. Figaro is Giboyer, the first of the name. I thought the type rather new, and I said —

D'Aigremont — You said to yourself, "Where have I seen that before?"

Couturier — Precisely.

Marquis — Yes, Beaumarchais, the eldest son of Voltaire, is the own father of Giboyer. Our contemporary has not the honor of that creation. I will render him justice, nevertheless: he has appropriated the treasure-trove loyally. He has not unmarked the linen, as was said of one of his illustrious rivals: he has made holes in it, crumpled it, dirtied it, and rendered it his own by that labor, as natural as adroit. Thus he has satisfied the brutality of the present taste, he has made *realism*, and honestly put his mark on the object borrowed. Giboyer is Figaro grown old, but as he should grow old: filthy, heavy, imbruted by the logic of his ways. From the journal he has fallen to journalism; he was only unbelieving, he is impious; he was only impudent, he is cynical; he intrigued, now he serves, and in serving betrays; he let himself be paid, now he puts himself up for sale. He tumbles without an effort to ridiculous and odious trades, — mute, ticket-seller, purveyor of speeches pro and con. Formerly husband of the natty Suzanne, now lover or seducer of a folder-girl, whom he leaves at the corner of the wall with her baby. In a word, he escapes ignobleness on no side. Filthy, sluttish, smelling of a pipe; formerly a guttersnipe, now a sot. This progress of his degradation is very observable. The oddity is to have made of this very Giboyer a Platonician and a mystic.

D'Aigremont — What would you have? There must be a little of the ideal too. That ingredient is of prime necessity. Realism does not dispense it, but no more can it dispense with it. A fine metaphysical subject: necessity and love for the true, impracticability and distaste for the true; and these two contraries permanent and imperious in man! Religion makes the great harmony for the *soul:* art should operate in the things of the mind. But art is faithful or rebellious, pure or corrupted. Faithful and pure, it takes the true and transfigures it into the beautiful; rebellious, — that is, corrupted, — it takes the true and disfigures it into the ignoble; it seeks there for its type, which is extreme degradation. Only, arrived at that limit, it perceives one thing: that is, that the *realized* work is no longer

interesting, no longer living, no longer possible; it fails of the miserable goal it tends to, the absolute glorification of the absolute bad. Human nature revolts; all the moral puissances, awakened and insulted, repulse the creation of ignominy. The low blackguards who have attained their fullness of depravation are not merely altogether repulsive to see: experience discloses that they are altogether mischievous, and that they become altogether stupid. All intelligence is extinguished in the sot. We are intimate with them, these Giboyers, those who have written and those who have read! Many a time have we visited their hopeless slums; many a time have we found them drunk, sleeping off the alms they have just wrung from us for their families who are a prey to hunger. Setting on these brutes to pillage is easy, and our dwellings are known to them. But to erect them into a legitimate argument against society, and present them as the founders of a new and better order, there was no means! The drunken slave can only create disgust with drunkenness. What was to be done? Then was invented the stupid and immoral procedure of supposing in these living sewers, not alone heroic virtues, but all the delicacies of a soul the most vigilant to keep itself pure; and that without the grace of God, without recourse to God, but on the contrary with ignorance, hate, or contempt of God! To make them walk in the firmest path of virtue, all the while remaining in mire up to their necks, it is enough they should have what Giboyer calls a *turlutaine* [hobby].

Couturier — Tur —

D'Aigremont — Turlutaine, tur-lu-taine.

Couturier — My Lord Marquis, do you know this tongue?

Marquis — Turlutaine is the same thing as *toquade*. Toquade is "played out," and no longer in use this six months. In old French, in *ganache* [old-fogy] French, we say a *manie* or a *folie*. Giboyer's turlutaine is paternal love: a turlutaine, he says, "which is as well worth while as a snuff-box collector's." It pleases him "to be a dunghill and fertilize a lily."

D'Aigremont — Yes. After having forgotten his folder-girl's boy six years in the gutter, the polluted Giboyer is all at once seized with paternal love. An unlikely turlutaine if ever there was one! But he really is seized. And suddenly, without reforming his nasty life in any way, he becomes an archangel. He becomes a great philosopher, great politician, great writer, and does not for all that cease blackguardizing more

and more; but the more the man blackguardizes, the more the archangel shines out. This singular partnership of tramp and archangel subsists twenty years in perfect accord. Each transacts his business separately; the archangel without cleaning up the tramp; the tramp without depluming the archangel. Marvelous effect of a turlutaine, more marvelous than all the miracles of the Golden Legend! With twenty years of mud accumulated on an old ground-soil already rich, Giboyer has not been able to submerge his genius. On the contrary, this peripatetic dunghill whence a lily springs is also the combustible which feeds the beautiful and clear flame of thought; and even while counting his tickets, our rogue has written the gospel of the coming world.

Couturier — Do you know, my friend, you are telling one of Balzac's novels there — some Vautrin or other that I turned over some time or other? This Vautrin, policeman, thief, clever murderer, old convict, famous wit besides, cherishes also the paternal turlutaine, and equally produces a son beloved by the ladies. But I do not recall whether Vautrin manufactured a gospel.

D'Aigremont — That might happen. Nevertheless Balzac's genius must have saved him from that vice. Giboyer as reformer of Christian society — that is something that might pass for its audacity; it is a slap, not at the Clerical party, but at all society and the morality of all times, and at the special good sense of the audience. The audacity of outrage, the audacity of the absurd. But not at all! society as a whole either considers it very good and renders itself an accomplice in the outrage it undergoes, or thinks it very aged and cares no more about it. It is surfeited with this personage of honorable infamy, who for twenty or thirty years, by the general law of modern progress, has replaced the former virtuous criminal, grown tiresome. Giboyer is Figaro crossed with Marion Delorme. Virginity remade! M. Hugo as much as Beaumarchais is the literary ancestor of our writer.

Marquis — My dear D'Aigremont, you have come very little short of dispensing me from explaining what sort of merit I recognize in the play and the author.

D'Aigremont — Well, my friend, finish out.

Marquis — Not yet, if you please; but I foresee that we shall be of the same opinion. For the moment, permit me to observe that if the author of "Giboyer" does really descend from

Beaumarchais and Victor Hugo, it is conformably to that law of modern progress you speak of: the descendant of two great artists is only a heavy-handed workman.

Couturier — Come, come! allow him wit.

Marquis — If you push me to the wall, my dear Couturier, I should say he is a mason. He has just what wit is needed to be the cleverest man in France for a certain time, in a certain quarter. You have to know his tongue, you have to be of his quarter. He has already less wit when you have crossed from the right bank to the left; he leaves considerably more of it on the thresholds of the fine houses; pass the fortifications and the slump is disastrous. Imagine a reader capable of enjoying the favor of La Fontaine, Mme. de Sévigné, or Le Sage, but who should have lived at Meaux for a dozen years: what would he find in it? Impertinences often unintelligible. Put it under the eyes of a woman of wit and honor, and she would be simply revolted.

Couturier — Marquis, you must have some special theory of wit — some superannuated theory.

Marquis — What would you have? I was born old, and I believe I am growing old still. To my notion, wit is a gift of seeing and speaking justly, but speaking justly in a continual soaring of the imagination that colors, that animates, that creates originality while guarding simplicity. It is the style, the substance of spontaneity and wisdom, out of which Mme. de Sévigné makes her letters, La Fontaine his fables, Molière his dialogue, Montaigne his rambling. That substance, that exquisite substance, these pickers-up never pick up; and among those who are called people of wit, many cannot even discern it. It is not the utterance, it is not the sparkle nor the flash of fire nor the sting; it is the grace and flower of intellect, more delicious than elsewhere in Mme. Sévigné, because of her perpetual blossoming out of honest joy. Do not confound simpering, grimace, and fard with the sparkle of health on a charming visage! True wit rejects tinsel, it does not allow itself to be embittered by hate. A bedizened bottle dishonors good wine, an addition of alcohol spoils it. Good wit and good wine have enough in their laughing robe and their wholesome warmth.

Couturier — My Lord Marquis, ought I at once to burn half my library and empty half my cellar? How many pearls will you leave me in the two caskets?

Marquis — Why, my friend, I do not scorn inferior qualities, second growths. Among these second growths of wit we count La Bruyère, Regnard, Le Sage, and others. There are honorable places there! And you can descend as far as M. Paul de Kock and Surennes wine.

Couturier — I breathe again.

Marquis — See my breadth. I make a third category for mixtures and hybrids; mixtures more or less happy, hybrids more or less approaching the superior race.

Couturier — And my author?

Marquis — Fourth and last category: that of fabrications, manipulations, and chemical products. There are minds like artificial wines. You give them strength, froth, a certain bad fieriness. There is more or less of wine in them, and more or less of drugs. I place your man there, at a certain glorious distance from M. Legouvé and all that is "immediately below nothing."

Couturier — You are paying him a compliment!

Marquis — I am rendering him justice. Be assured his own conscience will not protest. An author who has resolved to make a "social piece" deliberately classifies himself in the ranks of manipulators. Study the character and aim of the social and democratic comedy: it is the same thing as democratic and social wine, and all that bears those two epithets of the time. This comedy is not made with heart-throbs, nor this wine with grape; and the manufacturer knows he is working for the pot-house. As for the rest, the sale is assured. These chemical brewages, these *potions*, enrich the producer, and are of great importance from the political point of view. The people won't fuddle itself with anything else.

Couturier [*to the* COUNT] — Well, Zouave, what do you say?

Count — And yet, after all, I wish I knew what it is I like in "Giboyer"; for positively I do like something in it. After seeing the piece, I read it. I was dissatisfied with myself for feeling a core of admiration —

D'Aigremont — Oh!

Count — On my word, yes; a core of admiration for a work which at the same time I felt to be false and condemnable. It would have pleased me to have it bad at all points. I thought myself under the spell of the acting. Those fellows are in the trade, and it isn't a pretty trade. What faces the women have, especially! There are young ones among them, though.

Couturier — They know how to make a face that never wrinkles.

Count — Then I recalled an axiom of my professor of rhetoric : In the matter of plays, he told us, the good ones can't be played, the bad ones can't be read. I submitted "Giboyer" to the test of reading.

Marquis — Well ?

Count — Well, it didn't make me weary. It is lively, bustling, swift ; nothing lingers. None of the personages hang fire in what they want to say, nothing drags ; you can read it all aloud —

Marquis — When you have taken care to send away the ladies.

Count — To be sure ; but the class being given — ?

Marquis — I don't pretend the author does not know how to work. His machine is skillfully mounted, its grooves slide, its doors open and shut, its people enter and leave — they don't converse, but they chatter ; in a word, the artificial wine makes the cork pop to perfection. It is the dexterity of Scribe, with a little of the art of Beaumarchais. I will wait a few years, till you have more experience of life and good writings : then you can judge of the drawing and the coloring.

Couturier — Do you surrender, Count ?

Count — I am beaten ; if a treaty is proposed to me, I will accept it.

Couturier — As for me, I stick. This work pleases me ; I find it in the fashion. Crinoline, fard, comb-play, nose in the air, saucy eye —

Marquis — All that makes a quarter of an hour's pleasure. But imagine all that to-morrow morning, after the ball, in broad daylight ? Picture to yourself all that make-up as a fourth at the Judgment of Paris.

D'Aigremont — The idea is good. I have dreamed of that terrible justice of confrontation. The author has ventured to compare himself with Molière, just as Molière ventured to compare "Tartufe" with "Polyeucte" : I would have liked to induce him to read his piece in public, as Molière did — but I should have selected the drawing-room audience. Imagine "Giboyer's Son" at Mme. Swetchine's, when Lacordaire, Donoso Cortès, Dom Guéranger, the Abbé Dupanloup, Berryer, Montalembert, Falloux, were to be found there. Picture to yourselves, around the mistress of the quarters, that circle of

women so elevated and so sweet, who pilfered her wisdom and her virtue. The reading is ended, not without the author having sweated great drops, as frightened as Macbeth before the ghost of Banquo. We are at the judgment. What astonishment on all sides! I hear the Duchess de la R—— ask for the translation of *turlutaine;* I see the Countess Sophie Swetchine, in her compassion, trying to shield the caricaturist of the Baroness Sophie Pfeffers. But what is yet to depict is the affright of the comic eagle in the midst of those Clericals, who displume him by judicious strokes of the beak, and finally expel him, so stripped that the unpublished volume of Giboyer senior would not suffice to reclothe him with down.

Marquis — Note that the scene would be the same in the less elevated zones of the Spirit of '89. Imagine only among the auditors M. Guizot, M. Thiers, M. de Barante, M. de Rémusat, M. Cousin, M. Duchâtel, M. Vitet, M. Villemain: you see at once how the author would sustain his personage. Without any one objecting a word, he would feel it flattened out, sent back to the vaudeville. I say that in all places where obscenity and buffoonery are not in fashion, he would be ill at ease and ask to depart.

Couturier — Hang it, I'd like to give myself a little of that comedy! Gentlemen, you no longer have before you the Clerical bourgeois prig, Pierre François Couturier. Of ancient principles, a fortune honestly gained in business and some experience in public affairs have disturbed my natural uprightness. It seemed to me very simple that men of a given period, having undergone the same experiences, should act together in defense of possessions diverse, it is true, but established on the same soil and equally endangered. What does it matter, I said, that one prefers his field, another his manufacture, another his garden, another his steeple: all ought to combat the plague that menaces all. I have changed, gentlemen. Giboyer has lent me his manuscript book. I have not read it: the mere odor that exhales from it has revealed to me a publicist stronger than Bonald, Joseph de Maistre, and Donoso Cortès, and perhaps comparable to Guéroult. What a pipe! All my past convictions have vanished in this perfume of the future. I no longer believe that the old religion, the old morality, the old fashion of having one wife and heirs, can serve henceforth for the base of the social order. The society that reposes on them is corrupt and barbarous: corrupt, barbarous, and imbecile

the old Couturier, who dreamed of maintaining the ruinous monarchical and Christian edifice! I abjure that Couturier; I abolish him; I take a title of nobility which will efface Montmorency, Guizot, and Magenta. I am the citizen Gibaugier, chamberlain of the new ideas; I bear azure with three golden bladders, placed two and one.

Marquis — Excellent blazon! Two comedians for support, and it will lack nothing.

Count — But why three bladders?

Marquis — The first for picaresque comedy, the second for social comedy, the third for the comedy of virtue: for we still hold to that article — which is paid extra.

Couturier — Having become a lily, — at the roots, — I make myself the champion of my new fathers and my new faith. Come, men of the past, come: old fogies, what do you say against those you ought to bless? A moralist is braving the perils of the theater with the generous design of purifying your manners and quickening up your laggard minds. You attack him. Whatever you have said, know first that I honor his courage. Against two coalesced old parties, he defends two weaknesses: that of the government and that of the democracy.

D'Aigremont — Oh, not at all! According to Giboyer, the old parties are *a legion of colonels without regiments*, *a staff without troops* [jokes of long standing]; *the day of a serious enrollment*, they will *find themselves beating the roll-call in the desert*, which signifies that they will raise nothing; then the democracy has nothing to fear. And as *those fellows are formidable only to the governments they uphold*, the government they do not uphold has no need of reënforcements against them. All the more it may wish for a vengeance — which your author can make shift to procure for it.

Couturier — Well, my author protects your very selves. He places in safety from your deplorable victories the present that saves you and the future that will transfigure you.

Marquis — Nay, not at all! As to victories, the Clericals cannot win any, that has just been established. As to the advantages which the present and the future assure them, the present does not save them even from the insults and libels of your moralists; the future promises them nothing agreeable, if it is to transfigure them into Giboyers.

Couturier — What! that Giboyer so courageously infatuated

with the noblest of turlutaines — you don't find him at bottom full of adorable virtues!

D'Aigremont — He is certainly the virtuous hero of the play; but after all he is an open blackguard, and we are not yet used —

Couturier — You'll get used. That is precisely the great and holy work of the democratic muse. Democracy will efface all soilments, as it will break all chains.

Marquis — Ah! might the unchained hurry and take a bath! Do you expect it?

Couturier — We are sure of it. Besides, if Giboyer offends you, you know he is reserved for America. Your scruples have been foreseen and provided for. The type is Maximilien. Isn't he charming at every point, that young Giboyer — isn't he in truth a lily?

D'Aigremont — Delicious, fresh, pure, endowed with a facility of opinion and a taste for cigars that make it easy to divine his unknown father in him; accommodating on the subject of family, accepting father, stepfather, grandmother, absolutely as they are given to him; son of Giboyer, son of everybody. Impossible to present us with a democratic pill more sweet to swallow! But what will become of him, that amiable child who finds himself suddenly overwhelmed with so many parents and so large an independence, for the sole merit of having refuted between midnight and six in the morning an opinion he had held from noon till six in the evening? Has he a character? Does he offer a guaranty? I see in him only a Giboyer better kept, so long as he has not squandered his estate. Do you know the Count d'Outreville seems to me of quite another stamp, and is truly the noble young man and the hero of the occasion?

Couturier — It is my turn to say "Not at all!" What, this Carpentras sexton, this novice with the flat locks, this virgin simpleton, who "has a frank appearance — a counterfeit franc!"

D'Aigremont — Another fine phrase that was lying around loose. But let us argue. Strip off the base mimicry and histrionism, and the sexton is only a provincial innocent. His sole inferiority to Giboyer's son is in not having yet found a tailor, not having yet "lost the holy ignorance of evil," and still believing in God. In all that, there is no irreparable vice. The aristocratic sexton hesitates to ally himself with the ridicu-

lous Maréchal, but his pride would be honored by an alliance with Cathelineau; a sufficiently modern sentiment for a son of the Crusaders. All Fernande's dowry does not lead him to shut his eyes to the democratic leanings of that knowing young girl; he resists the despotic and furthermore stupid insolence of the Marquis d'Auberive, who wishes to make him marry her at all hazards — he does not know how to pretend love. When Maréchal has turned traitor, he withdraws; when love has come, he throws himself headlong, disdaining the Marquis' fortune, into the snares of a coquette in whom he fancies all the virtues. So the sexton is neither so false, nor so greedy, nor so mean-spirited. He will rub off his verdancy and get dressed. Give him a week to take on the Paris air, the *urbana frons*, and he will crush your Giboyers. As a sincere Christian he dominates them by all the loftiness of his origin and all the dignity of his beliefs; as a free-thinker, practicing all your large maxims, the advantage of his blazon remains with him, — and the young Giboyer may regret having carried off Fernande from him.

Couturier — Oh, tck! 'sh!

D'Aigremont — Faith, my dear M. Gibaugier, I assure you I won't answer for anything! Fernande holds to the religion of the future, in which I see no resource against temptations. Are your democratic heroes and heroines made of wood? Have they never any but virtuous "turlutaines"? The young Giboyeress is pure, I don't know exactly why; but that lily too has a dunghill in its roots, and a big one! and she is curious and bold! and for a girl of seventeen, she soon gets used to kissing a youth who comes along!

Couturier — She has to compromise herself to end the play.

D'Aigremont — I don't say no, but she is not sparing of it. What decision! Unless the triumphant young Giboyer should be always amiable and always please her, I don't guarantee Fernande for a year. You see, M. Gibaugier, for a woman to stumble it isn't necessary she should have been educated at a convent, nor belong to the Altar Society. She can slip just as disastrously in libraries, when she goes there all alone to find a young secretary, to ask him for books he would give his sister. Thus Mlle. Julie d'Étanges [Rousseau's], one of the innumerable ancestresses of Fernande, ends by entanglement with a Bohemian called St. Preux, own cousin to the junior Giboyer. For no more is she a first-hand invention, this engaging Fer-

nande! And that a lily may obtain its whiteness and its perfume, dear M. Gibaugier, it is not enough that its roots are plunged in a rich dunghill: it is still necessary for the pure sky and the brilliant sunshine to stream over its head. As to the dunghill around your lilies, there is one, God protect us! Giboyer, Auberive, Maréchal — that is to say, vagabondage, cynical adultery, ignominious betrayal — there's fatness! But the pure sky and the vivifying sun that shed color and aromas, where are they? I see no other planet above these young plants than the pipe of the elder Giboyer. Your lilies are fat, but pale and inodorous.

Couturier — M. d'Aigremont, you are sixty; you are not posted on this any longer. Let us take a more competent judge of the girl's proud character. What do you think of Fernande Maréchal, my Lord Count?

Count — In truth, you embarrass me. On the stage I do not see women, I only see actresses — beings almost chimerical, and who have no existence for me outside of that place, where I regard them with a certain sorrowful curiosity. She who represents Fernande Maréchal is fine in her species. I had not thought at all that she could be a character, a soul, a person in short, and I had never asked myself whether I should like her or should not like her. What did it matter? She is totally outside the world where I shall seek my wife. Daughter of an ancient house, or bourgeois, or peasant, my wife will certainly be nothing that resembles that. I know no more about Fernande's character than if the actress had pantomimed and danced it. Nevertheless, one word gave me a curious shock. When Fernande learns that her Giboyer is decamping and will find himself without a place, she exclaims, "*I have taken away his bread!*" The speech seemed to me ignoble, and the opposite of all that delicacy and affection ought to suggest. "I have taken away his bread!" I don't know why, but I affirm that a woman does not love and never will love a man she reproaches herself with such a wrong toward, and whose lot can inspire her with such an anxiety. His *bread!* Is she proposing to feed him? Does she suspect him of thinking of that? The cry is of a finished vulgarity! If the young Giboyer heard it, and did not disaffection himself on the instant, I should hold him for the most arrant whiffet that ever went heiress-hunting. Your Fernande has the instincts of a saleswoman. And when M. d'Aigremont tells us that she is an

inodorous lily, I do not find her so: this lily fertilized by a dunghill — has an odor of soil.

Marquis — That's it.

Count — I add that the author places his lovers in very unwholesome and anti-poetic conditions. Giboyer, Maréchal, the old Auberive — what guardian angels around these young people! what putrefaction of sentiments and language! what perspectives, in a word! Fernande would be no sooner married than the septuagenarian rake would be telling her juicy stories; Maréchal would multiply mean stupidities; and Giboyer, still noble, would bring into the drawing-room his pipe, his turlutaines, and his gutter-slang. The first sentiment your gracious bastards must hold in common will be the utterest contempt for all they know of fathers and relatives. In this regard, the play offers a spectacle as profoundly disgraceful as profoundly immoral. The elders there are made hail-fellows, put to rights, laughed at, by the juniors, and all shocking either for cynicism or silliness. And as nothing proclaims that Maximilien Giboyer will drive them out, it is easy to foresee that the house will promptly become a sewer — fit to bear lilies.

Marquis — Bravo, Zouave! What do you say of it, M. Gibaugier?

Couturier — *I like to see how you teach him!* This poor young fellow is more backward than yourself, if possible; he will never enjoy the graces and liberties of the democratic household. But I should have thought him better disposed to taste our literature. You change your tune very promptly, my little Count: at the beginning of this conversation you found us good.

Count — If I found you good, or rather attractive, I found you also false, and even repugnant. I perceive of myself that scrutiny is not favorable to you. I rejoice at it; for this lively noise and this optical illusion with which I was half charmed, weighed on my conscience. In proportion as I emancipate myself from it, your success gives me less fear. I begin to find that really it isn't very powerful. I begin to believe that public reason and good sense will prevail. This animated pamphlet is nothing but an irritating centipede; it has no muscles, no bony structure, no head. It will be put feet up, and that will end it. But, gentlemen, since we have undertaken the investigation of the characters, let us finish, please. This method goes to the spot. Uncle, what do you think of the Marquis d'Auberive?

Marquis — I knew him intimately. He was an old relative of mine. Rich, bored, debauched, in youth; impious in tone, to imitate the men of letters he fed, admired, and despised; nonentity at bottom, with manners dignified enough. He was called Count Almaviva [Beaumarchais']. When the Revolution broke out, he missed the chance to redeem his past life : he had no point of honor to fight for, and it was not made a point of honor to guillotine him. He wore a sort of red cap, the least dirty he could find, hid under a carmagnole a little money he had saved, and was able to crouch low enough to make himself forgotten. This gentleman deserved to be a democrat; he was seen in Barras' drawing-rooms. Later he became chamberlain, and I know not what besides, and chevalier of honor to some queen or other, who nevèrtheless ejected him. About the time of this catastrophe, a little previous, he was captured, conspiring with some white and red boobies, the former almost honest, the latter altogether rogues. In this fine company he held a midway position. A taste of prison covered his carmagnole and his livery. In 1816 he proclaimed himself a martyr. To his old defects he added the most intolerable aristocratic arrogance and a victor's swagger. The triple fool believed himself the restorer of monarchy and religion, and maintained an unembarrassed demeanor toward his two clients. He had always his same clan of scattered and battered conspirators, wherein many blacklegs introduced themselves. All this gang plundered and laughed at him. Giboyers were not lacking there : white Giboyers, red Giboyers, Giboyers changing color at will or wearing two colors at once. He counted on these athletes to hoist himself into the ministry, and apply at last his ideas of government, — a mixture, a mess, a *detritus* of all the doctrines that ignorance, conceit, and fear had introduced into a brain where nothing entered whole and nothing stood upright. Aristocrat and democrat, Voltairian at heart and Christian in flag ; at bottom an impertinent, possessed by the feeble mania of political intrigue and the puppyism of bad manners ; but beyond everything a fool. Some felicity of repartee, aided by a scoffing cast, made him pass for an unrecognized Talleyrand, and he was as proud of it — ! A fool, I repeat, admirer of Pigault-Lebrun [1] and champion of the liberties of the Gallican church. He horrified

[1] Augier's grandfather, a voluminous writer of empty, frothy, and libertinous novels, very popular in their day.

us. That was the least of his troubles ; but we did not conceal from him that we thought him at the same time very ridiculous, and he underwent a sorrow from it which avenged us without, alas ! converting him. When he saw Roman principles dominate at last in the religious press and the royalist press, the last appearances of reason seemed to flicker out in him. He died assisted by Giboyer, who had become his chum while meditating a memorial to persuade the Pope to excommunicate Déodat. He detested Déodat, who had decisively shown him the door.

Couturier — Ah ! but from all you have just said, it results that we have not hit off our Marquis d'Auberive so ill.

Marquis — Pardon me, dear M. Gibaugier : your Marquis d'Auberive is a plagiarism, a caricature ; and more than all a calumny. Plagiarism : he is Figaro, but this time his very image. Caricature : a marquis of seventy and with eighty thousand francs income cannot lose the style of a gentleman ; your marquis bustles about like a comic valet, and talks exactly the language of Giboyer. Calumny : you give as the type of a class actually living, a figure who has long since disappeared from that class, and which never was there as often as the miserable hates of the democracy allege. The corrupt of the old régime have been amply punished for the crime — a great one, moreover — of having abandoned the law of God and the law of their order, to live according to the maxims of free thought. You know what hands their heads fell under, and what pockets their goods passed into ; you know too what was the moral superiority of Robespierre and Fouquier-Tinville over Almaviva. Those who escaped and did not turn their coats have left no descendants. It is twenty years since I saw the last one die, — more than half of yours.

D'Aigremont — Observe, M. Gibaugier, that the Marquis d'Auberive, whom you profess to make us a present of, is entirely and resolutely yours, passed over to the democracy with arms and baggage, disinheriting his own blood to enrich Giboyer's grandson.

Couturier — No, that doesn't make the Marquis a democrat. He merely shows once more that he is the true father of Fernande.

Marquis — Ah, let us talk of that papa !

Couturier — Why, certainly. That allusion, multiplied in the piece, runs through it like a golden thread by which the

lovable Fernande is unceasingly relinked to her illustrious origin. The thread perpetually reappears with a bolder joviality. The peevish spirits, the Clericals, — let us speak out the word, the hypocrites, — affect false modesty about it. They turn away like Tartufe before the innocent shoulders of Dorine. They say the cynicism is not comic, and that the incessant calling up of the adulterous and defunct mother makes something lugubrious and unclean hover about the daughter which does not embellish her. Come, then, my prudish gentlemen, set yourselves to the free step of the democratic muse. Its frank indecency amuses the audience greatly. There is a wave of laughter every time the Marquis shows George Dandin's [Molière's gulled husband] cap on the bourgeois Maréchal's oratorical forehead.

D'Aigremont — A fine trade, M. Gibaugier, that of dramatic and democratic moralist!

Couturier — Know, sir, that the moralist purifies everything he touches. We are straightforward in this, we of that order. Assured of the purity of our intentions, we gaze with open eyes, we speak with unmuffled voices. We leave to you the indecisive glances, the timid desires, the "chaste vows," and [*reading*] "that mystic sensuality which is the orgy of virtue."

Marquis — The author of "Giboyer" has his mysticism — we will speak of it; but assuredly it is not that of Christians nor the chaste. While we are touching on this subject, the phrase you have just borrowed from him brings me back to his style, which is of the grossest, especially in the two characters where seemliness and distinction of language should be indispensable, — that of the Marquis and that of the Baroness. The Marquis is an old rogue who turns over to democracy, the Baroness is an adventuress — so be it! But since they lead the entire Faubourg Saint-Germain, since they are the chiefs of the Legitimist and Catholic party, this rogue and this adventuress ought at least to speak the language of the territory and the situation. Otherwise, what credit could they obtain? Without exquisite dignity of language and exquisite correctness of bearing, the Baroness is especially impossible. You allow to the dramatic poet all improbabilities of matter: but the probability of persons and characters is the first law of art; here it is absurdly violated. Outside of his nauseous and insupportable affectation of septuagenarian "tough subject," your Marquis talks like Giboyer. He is not an old dotard, he is not an old gentleman, he is Figaro, and Figaro smutted. He makes ribald

speeches to his servant, he makes them to the Baroness, he makes them *aside* to himself; he cannot have enough of them. He is not content to draw from the grave the memory of the first Mme. Maréchal's slip; he laughs at his own wife, dead also, and that for the amusement of his valet-de-chambre! A perfect example of mediocre wit very ill placed. He says to his nephew, on showing him Fernande, "*Do as well for yourself.*" He had already said to him: "She is the handsomest person I know — *I boast of it*": — a tricksiness borrowed directly from Figaro. Giboyer may permit himself these hiccoughs of bad literature; but a gentleman, the chief of a party! The Marquis announcing to the Baroness that he has found the duplicate of Déodat, and is to make him the editor-in-chief of his journal, defines him, "*A lad* that will lard his own father with epigrams for a *modest compensation*, and eat him like celery for *five francs* more." Giboyer might speak so: the Marquis could not. If you admit as a trait of character that his imbecile rage for playing the wit leads him to belittle himself with the people he employs, he would at least employ the language of men of high rank. This language you are ignorant of has more elevation than yours, and not less energy. The remark applies still more to the Baroness' language. This pious great lady, the oracle of high society, has the smart speech of a soubrette. The long scene with the Marquis in the first act is a skirmish of Frontin with Marton. What is said on either side is equally out of character. They drop the mask, they send back the ball, they openly contemn themselves, they make compacts like unblushing *picaros*. I deny that any woman, even an intriguer, would listen (unless to be identified) to half the grossnesses she allows to be said to her. She accepts, she responds, she thrusts. The Marquis compliments her eyes; — "It's well for you, *scoffer*, to pay attention to such things as that." I am surprised that she never calls him an old scamp. She rallies him on account of the first Mme. Maréchal, where every one must know he is doting, and he does not fail to expand. There are other polite speeches, like this: "It's a fool you want for a husband." — "Because — ?" And, "You do anything you please with me." — "Ah, Baroness! how I'd take you at your word if I were only sixty!" Pure infection!

Count — And the scene in the third act, where the Baroness sets herself to inflame the young Count d'Outreville by making him fasten her bracelet on! And if you had seen it played!

Marquis — I can imagine it. I have not followed the theater for some years without viewing that scene many times every year; and I know what actresses who play the devotee parts are capable of. In general, they excel by perversions; but that is what is needed to carry away the public. Tartufe with the face of an honest man would empty the seats. The comedian would take one half more trouble and not have so much personal pleasure nor so much success.

D'Aigremont — Moliere wanted "Tartufe" played in lay dress: the comedians rig him out in a semi-ecclesiastical costume. They know quite well what they are doing.

Marquis — Pay attention to the mystery of the theater. The theater is neither an art nor a career like others. Applause, money, fame, are to be found there; but all is not glory, still less honor. In truth, the comic tribe is a tribe of outlaws. On the little door at the rear, where the actors enter, is the inscription of hell, *Lasciate:* lose the hope of egress, lose the hope of ever tearing from off your flesh the cassock and the fard of the histrion! On the other side of that slope begins the inaccessible. Where the world in general enters, the comedian cannot penetrate more. His opulence is courted, justice is rendered to his private qualities: there will always be that other, always a rag of that cassock, always a streak of that fard. One of the actors of "Giboyer" bells after the cross of the Legion of Honor. His ambition seems modest. He is old, honest as an individual, professor of declamation, author of diverse decent rhymes; nevertheless he cannot pluck this cornflower he sees blooming, like the democratic "lily," down to his least tradesmen. The day when a comedian, be he ten times a well-bred man, shall attach the cross of the Legion to Scapin's waistcoat, the Grand Chancellor may pack up, the institution will be dead. Outlaws, I tell you, outlaws in perpetuity! Now, just as the characteristic of the exile is to sigh for his fatherland, the characteristic of the outlaw is to hate it. He wishes to reënter there, but as conqueror. The exile, driven out by force and often by injustice, is willing to pardon; the outlaw, who is barred out by his own free will, does not pardon. He holds a grudge against the order from which he has separated. He loves to launch sarcasms at it, to defame it by the representation of conditions and characters which constitute its vigor more than he, and whence his own person is more irreparably set apart. That is perhaps why the

rôles of dashing blackguards are so abundant and so varied in the modern theater, since Figaro : they excite the spirit of the comedians more, and in consequence serve the fortunes of the theater better. Next after the Giboyers and the Marions who trample on the heads of society, the parts assured of finding mordant interpreters are those of evil-spirited great lords, big stupid bourgeois, honest country boobies, hypocritical and corrupt great ladies. The last character affords revenges, and the most limited actresses sometimes display a surprising art in them. They sting, they burn, they have hypocrisies and audacities that transport the audience. Be sure that more than one, inwardly, is not content with tasting her glory and doing homage to her virtue. She says to herself, "I am better than those women, I am frank, I wear my heart on my sleeve ! " That may be done very well at the Théâtre Français, but I am persuaded it is not done very ill at the Perigueux Theatre [provincial].

Count — Let us understand, uncle. Very well for the audience, yes. It rumbles : a growl of bestial contentment runs incessantly through that mass, bursts out in acclamations, mounts into delirium. It is curious and shocking. You see there, on certain faces, the completest flowering out of the most evil human stupidity. At the torture of the virgin martyrs there were certainly those faces, silly, cruel, and entertained. But that the actress represents, even afar, the personage she calls herself, a woman of the world of rank, I deny.

Marquis — Good heavens, where should she have met with a model to copy ? There is more than the river between the drawing-room of the noble and holy Countess Swetchine and the Théâtre Français. The ladies of the Théâtre Français study the ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain in the pictures their writers make for them, as they hardly pass the bridges themselves.

Count — Quite right. The dress, the voice, the attitude, are there no more than the language, the thoughts, and the manners : it is scarcely a monkey's mimicry.

D'Aigremont — The scene in the first act is played as it is written. A dialogue introduces an Academician and a muse who solicits the prize for virtue. As to the scene of the bracelet —

Count — It is indescribable. I do not know a young booby, even a pupil of M. de Sainte-Agathe and freshly arrived from

the County, whom such manœuvres would not promptly illuminate, and who would let himself marry after having been their object. Certainly, the excess of morality which the author attributes to the Count d'Outreville is a very humiliating thing for that gentleman. To have kept till twenty-eight "the holy ignorance of evil" — that fact disastrously overloads his sad and shameful condition of a legitimate son. He loses Fernande Maréchal by it: a good thing. But in order that this double infirmity should still further expose him to the misfortune of marrying the Baroness, the actress overdoes it. He must see clearly, or he is an incurable idiot; and then his density proves nothing in favor of the folder-girl's son. When I heard, in the atmosphere poisoned by these indecencies and these guffaws, the name of the Countess Swetchine murmured, I underwent the same thrill of indignation as formerly when the street singers insulted Lamoricière; and I can hardly pardon myself for having been more patient. Truly the outrage is ours, since we submit to it.

Marquis — My dear boy, there are times when the hearts which these kinds of outrage still arouse can claim no other vengeance than submitting to them and feeling them. It is a great affliction, but it is a great honor. Happy they who are neither among the executioners, nor of the executioners' train, nor of the vast mob of indifferents; and who, unable to fight longer, uncover before the victims when they pass escorted by hoots! Let us detest the impiety of this populace led on by actors. At the very moment it crushes us, we can still tear from it the dearest part of its triumph, by rendering homage to the virtues it insults. Sophie Swetchine, so good, so wise, so humble, so pious toward God and the poor, so mild to error, so justly venerated! Many among us, and I was of them, reproached her with too much clemency toward some new ideas; others, with too much rigor toward herself, with squandering too much on good works the last days of her exhausted old age, and with unwillingness to fight bodily affliction except with the forces of the soul. She smiled; and day by day were seen in her more of holy severity toward herself, more of holy sweetness toward any other. When I met her in the morning less than five years ago, dragging herself along the road to church, I sometimes offered her my arm, sometimes contented myself with respectfully following her; it seemed to me that her passing established a current of pure air in the street. I saw that

Giving Alms

she was about to die, and I knew with what eulogiums and what tears she would be honored. If I had harbored the thought that a man of letters, even the lowest, was to seek in that noble existence for a motive of libellous caricature to be exploited by comedians, I should have thought I heard the reproaches of my old friend, and should have asked pardon for pushing to the point of insult my scorn of the present time.

Couturier — Marquis, let us talk seriously. My author has his faults, and even sins; but I do not believe he can be accused of intending to insult the sainted woman you speak of.

Marquis — The entire play is nothing but an outrage!

Couturier — Be it so. But this would be too absurd. Besides, you know he defends himself from having indulged in personalities. He has only confessed to one. It is a good feeling, and we must believe him.

Marquis — Whatever his feeling may be, I do not excuse him when he accuses himself; and when he excuses himself, I do not believe him. His entire apology on this point seems to me a shabby thing both in form and in substance. He does not intend, he says, to insult either M. Guizot or Mme. Swetchine, nor anybody save Déodat alone. Unfortunately, it is a phrase of M. Guizot, a Protestant, which serves as the theme for the entire episode of the political speech confided by the Clericals to the Protestant D'Aigremont. By another misfortune, he has given his adventuress the name, the foreign condition, and the particular and special position of Mme. Swetchine. Everybody knows that the drawing-room of the Russian Countess Sophie Swetchine was long the principal, not to say the only, Catholic salon of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Was your author the only one to be ignorant of it? The public immediately pronounced the name of Mme. Swetchine as it did that of M. Guizot. As to M. Guizot, your author is very sorry for him. He spends himself in denials which hardly raise the character of his attack, and which he has the mortification of not seeing accepted. As to Sophie Swetchine, who is dead, I do not know whether he has truly done himself the honor of experiencing a regret. He professes to know perfectly the rights and duties of comedy. "It owes," he says, "respect to persons, but it has a right over things." Is he capable of believing that the name, the quality, and what I may call the distinctive function of Sophie Swetchine, are *things*, and the

person of Déodat a *thing* too? These shufflings proclaim a humiliated, not to say troubled, spirit. The poet has not succeeded as he fancied he should; his victims live more honored than he. But the visible embarrassment he experiences avenges them without justifying him. He remains the author flagellated by the public conscience for an offense remarkable in grossness among all those of the modern muse, so hardened an offender.

Couturier — Marquis, you are implacable. I feel in you the spirit of the lamented Déodat, who, in his life, fortunately ended but too long, did so much harm to good doctrines by his rage for sustaining them entire. Come, don't you grant me anything? Do you reproach our author with the portrait of Déodat, too? If you fall into that excess, I become Gibaugier again to combat you.

Marquis — Oh, as to the portrait of Déodat, I have the same feeling as Déodat himself: he is satisfied.

D'Aigremont — He is not wrong. The grandson of Pigault-Lebrun, author of "Giboyer's Son," is above all suspicion of complaisance toward a Clerical writer in disfavor. Nevertheless, I know not how he could flatter our friend more. Firstly, this name of Déodat: *a Deo datus* [given by God]; Scripture teaches us that in the third war of David against the Philistines, Adéodat, son of the forest, Bethlehemite in origin, slew Goliath of Gath, brother of the Goliath whom David had slain. Secondly, he calls him the *hussar of orthodoxy;* but that phrase, whatever way you take it, is only a delicate compliment from the pen of the writer who dedicated his first work to the "venerated memory" of the author [Pigault-Lebrun] of "The Quoter," a treatise of putrid impiety. Thirdly, he says the style of Déodat "*consists* in *doubling up* the free-thinker, *knocking out* the philosopher, and in a word, preceding the ark with cane and billy." But that is Giboyer's style. Déodat neither spoke nor knew any gutter-slang, no more that of the Bohemian than any other. But really, to flagellate and lay low the free-thinker has nothing infamous about it. *Percussit Adeodatus Goliath Gethæi:* Scripture does not blame that action. And as to "preceding the ark with cane and billy," the poet cannot condemn that exercise — he who gives himself up so zealously to it before the car of state. All the more must he think Déodat a fool to wield the billy without protection and without profit, and address himself even to the people who can crush

him and have done it. Our poet has carried *his* method to perfection: he has the police on his side, and he attacks only non-combatants and handcuffed persons. To speak his own tongue for a moment, he *doubles up* the invalid, he *knocks out* the vanquished. If it is not the most glorious trade he could pursue, it is not the least lucrative: serious people could have no subject for hooting like Déodat, who died without having earned enough to bury him. From the meager trade of Déodat, he knows how to draw investment income. Let us give him a brevet for having perfected it. I observe, nevertheless, that if he has greatly softened the rendering, he has quite spoiled the style: I mean Déodat's. It is, he says, "a mixture of Bourdaloue and Turlupin." No one could take that for a slight homage. Bourdaloue! That name alone places a man instantly at a considerable distance — aloft — from Forcade and Schérer. But Turlupin added to Bourdaloue, the panegyric is a strong one! Déodat gave an account of the political scene: he could not play Bourdaloue solely in presence of a scene which often required a strong dose of Turlupin. Mme. de Sévigné did not soar on the track of Bossuet except when there was question of Turenne. How many occasions there are where Turlupin alone is current! Would it be decent to talk of Giboyer in the style of Bourdaloue? There must then be two styles, varying according to the subjects. If Déodat had been able to unite them, he would be a master workman. He does not say that of himself, and he praises himself only for the instinct which made him undertake the enterprise. For your author that does not exist! He wishes to glorify the democracy, to place in their luster and their heaven the immortal principles of '89, obscured by the black vapors of the past; there is a subject for eloquence: I listen, I wait for Bourdaloue, I never hear anything but Turlupin.

Couturier — The Bourdaloue, sir, is in Giboyer's manuscript, have no doubt.

Marquis — Then at the end of the comedy print the august manuscript as a *pièce justificative*. Or else don't turn up your nose at Turlupin, when you seem so perfectly incapable of getting away from him. *You foolishly attribute your qualities to others.*

D'Aigremont — And still, the Turlupinade may have a literary form; it is still irony, it is still the hiss. The *Giboyade* is only a servile insult; the method, in fact, of the mercenary to

whom one says, "Sell me your insolence and set your price." Suppose now around the mercenary a reënforcement of police or mob who shelter him in every way, up to imposing silence on indignant spectators: what do you think of *that* trade? Giboyer the fact, the real Giboyer, the one you see at work every morning and every evening, the democrat formerly conservative, then socialist and "an-archist," now "authoritary," — he works at that, this thinker, always ready to "empty a poisoned ink-bottle on *whoever*."[1] But the ideal and cleaned-up Giboyer whom you put forward for public veneration would not do it, or the public could not support the sight.

Marquis — So that your author, M. Gibaugier, wishing to defame but one man, — just one, no more, — has so managed that the one man he wishes to defame is precisely the one adversary to whom his thought renders a legitimate homage, even in the very insult with which he professes to overwhelm him. He calumniates without reserve and without measure the brute Voltairianism in the person of Maréchal; the cultivated Voltairianism in the person of the Marquis d'Auberive; the aristocracy in the person of Count d'Outreville; the great Christian world in the person of Baroness Pfeffers; the great bourgeois world in the person of the defunct Mme. Maréchal and that of the living Mme. Maréchal; the parliamentary world in the person of Maréchal and that of Couturier; finally, the democracy in the person of the elder Giboyer, who after all is nothing but a blackguard, in that of the younger Giboyer, who will never be anything but an ink-stained pedant, and in that of Fernande Maréchal, who has already cut her eye-teeth: what shall I say? he does not spare even the livery, that uniform of future equality; and the Marquis' servant, a certain Dubois, appears just at the time it is necessary to show the profile of a hypocrite. But Déodat he honors in fact, and above all by comparison; and this hostile portrait is the sole figure in the entire work which represents almost an honest man. Look closely.

Couturier — Ah, I see it too well! I think at least I may assure you it was not done purposely.

D'Aigremont — That is why no honor accrues to the painter from it, and he remains with the ridiculous remorse of having failed in a bad action.

[1] "Sur *quiconque*." Note by Veuillot: I do not know whether the author wished to write Giboyer French, or thought he was writing French *in earnest*. This doubt arises frequently in the course of the play.

Couturier — Huh? a bad action?

D'Aigremont — Yes, M. Gibaugier, a bad action, and judged so by men who are not the friends of Déodat in anything. Many would gladly have pardoned the wrong of wishing to belittle him: an invincible shame compels them to protest against the fashion. What! traduce an individual on the stage, attack his character, throw doubt on his convictions, deliver him up without possible defense to the judgments of a crowd completely incapable of disenvenoming the injury! This is more than the vengeance of the Sioux permits: it is to create a formidable precedent against all independent opinion. Such excesses not being commissible except with the concurrence of public authority, that alone will govern their employment, that is to say, will alone employ them. That terrible weapon has been given up to it! There will never be any lack of mercenaries to handle it! Déodat is struck first, another's turn may come. The plank is thrown across; and it is not to the honor of your poet to have opened again this passage in the thrice-dismantled rampart of public liberty. I doubt whether the virtuous Giboyer will be killed in the breach. No more in that will he be the duplicate of Déodat.

Couturier — Oh, come, M. d'Aigremont, —

> "Man is most prone of all the living world
> To rush into excess."

Let us quit this chapter: or is Déodat's honor your turlutaine?

D'Aigremont — A little. I do not yet blush for his cause, and I gladly defend him against those who decry him. I say that a few journalists such as Déodat was, speaking with entire frankness, speaking French, full of love for their cause, incapable of disguising it, incapable of betraying it, ill able to serve it but ready to die for it — I say that a few journalists of this moral stamp, scattered among the newspapers, could render the press a certain service which to-day it lacks, a certain savor of frankness which all the works of all the Giboyers of the democracy and the theater will never make up for. Insult that man and hand him over to the hoots of the audience, down to the pettiest villages: an honor has been done him which you will not efface. His name is the synonym for the liberty of the press. When he was overthrown, the liberty of the press underwent an eclipse; it will not reappear till he has arisen.

That will be the sign. Till then he may console himself for your outrages by contemplating his hand, mutilated and bound.

Couturier — May it remain so for the growth of civil and religious concord! We shall end by enjoying a delightful calm, provided "that insulter" does not irritate our lords the journalists and vaudevillists. See how they respect the Catholic beliefs, since Déodat no longer respects them.

D'Aigremont — Nothing truer could be said, Master Gibaugier, and there you are in accord with a good number of excellent Christians who reproached Déodat with not being hostile enough to the established power. On account of that, they have insulted and defamed him much more sensibly than all the democrats have been able to do. If your author read the polemic writings of his brothers of the Academy, — *there are almost* five *whom I could name*, — he would be surprised to see that Christians, gentlemen, and even more [archbishops], had carried their passion so far as to inveigh against Déodat in the very style of the Marquis d'Auberive and Giboyer. And it is a signal service you have rendered him, since at last he has reason to hope that his adversaries, the only ones who have been able to strike near his heart, will blush for having anticipated and perhaps instigated you. They must at the very least fear to imitate you.

Couturier — Pshaw! pshaw! the essential is that Déodat should reappear no more. He will never be dead enough! It is necessary to trample on him, and over his ruins inaugurate the era of literary good manners. War against Déodat is war against barbarism. When we have befouled his name with a common effort, then politeness will become the law of writers. Notice already how my author and another Academician, taking to the laurels on Giboyer's account, delicately pummel each other: "*Truffled caterpillar!*" says the one; "Ungrateful dog!" says the other. There is Atticism! Would your Déodat, the clown, have found such flowers? Let us restore everything to the tone of good fellowship. But to sum it all up, *Delendus est Deodatus!* It is social work, and I judge that on such an occasion St. Pius V. and all the other saints received at the Academy must act in concert with their brother Giboyer. No treaty, I say, and let us destroy Déodat! That will at least be something the Academy has done in this century, for —

Marquis — What, you have not ended?

Couturier — On such a chapter I should never finish! In a

word, to abridge, "Reprisals are so legitimate against that insulter, and he is so well armed for self-defense!"

D'Aigremont — Yes, and so well assisted by the crown attorney, who is watchful not to leave him too free an arm or too long a sword! But since you speak of reprisals, the quarrel must be settled. Such reprisals against a man reduced to silence, that is to say buried for three years, would indicate a rankling memory of blows very rough and very deep. Now I asked Déodat himself about that. I supposed merely, I confess, that he must of old have struck your author pretty hard. He recalled nothing of the kind, and thought he had never even named him.

Couturier — Then I have known of it longer than Déodat himself. You are not ignorant that he meddles in verse-making, since his hateful prose has no further outlet. It will be a sweet occupation, and one which might, if he would be wise, procure him some repose at last. But character must show through, and the knave writes satires. He published one the year past — what a shame! After having had for twenty years the honor of occupying himself with politics and the great affairs of the country, this man cannot accept his exile, and descends to literary frivolity in the little unstamped collections which can say nothing serious.

D'Aigremont — That is sad. But really, since Déodat did not make a fortune before the ark, and one must live —

Couturier — Oh, well! anyway, let him try to live without troubling the industry of his neighbors!

D'Aigremont — What harm has he done you?

Couturier — No harm, to be sure: he couldn't. But he makes himself disagreeable. In this piece, entitled "The Poetic Art," he strikes at heads crowned by the muse; he pretends that this goddess is sometimes of the demi-monde!

Marquis — He is wrong; it is a commonplace.

Couturier — Listen: —

"A share to procure
Of Budget or book-sales or Monthyon's lure,[1]

* * * * * *

With a drama of virtue all eyelids they shut;
Ope them wide the next night with a play full of smut;
People throng to the latter, applaud to the skies,
Hiss the former, but Monthyon pays with his prize:

[1] The Monthyon prize for virtue, given annually.

> And the author, wide open his hand at each door,
> Can tell whether virtue or vice brings in more.
> This fellow, who Molière his psalter has made,
> Can annotate 'Tartufe' as brother in trade."

How does it seem to you?

D'Aigremont — Then you take that to yourself?

Couturier — Well, we have received a prize of virtue.

> "If one has fixed in me so sharp a fang,
> Am I to weep as stripling unavenged?"

Marquis — "All reprisals are legitimate against that insulter." Ah, poor and imprudent Déodat, to be so often taken for a Liberal Tartufe! Paul Louis Courier said to himself, probably without believing it, "Paul Louis, the bigots will kill thee!" He was killed by a stable Antinoüs who scorned utterly the commandments of God and those of the Church. As to me, I said to Déodat, and I made no mistake: "The bigots of free thought will gag thee; they will prevent thee from saying that the earth turns around, and they will accuse thee of persecuting Galileo."

D'Aigremont — Nevertheless, I do not believe the author of Giboyer has yielded to a personal resentment. He would have been more moderate. It is as avenger of the flourishing Giboyer species that he considered everything permissible. On this head, I admit, he had long reprisals to execute. Déodat has often met his clients, and has maltreated them everywhere. The Giboyers are relatives of Tartufe, and Tartufe is one of the ancestors of the democracy. When the democratic sheets are provided, or when the times are calm and Giboyer can no longer earn "his tobacco" by barking at Christians, what does he do? He changes his tobacco pouch into a rosary, introduces himself to Orgon, dupes and plunders him. I could cite twenty Giboyers, all perfect democrats, who have filched their orthography, their Latin, and their Hebrew, in the [clerical] seminaries. Before placing themselves where any one sees them, they have become Orleanist journalists, Legitimist journalists, some even religious journalists. Giboyer tells us that the Republic refused his services; that is because he does not wish to "lard his own mother with epigrams." He serves her always. She is, thank God, neither delicate enough nor prudent enough to remove him from official functions; but he him-

self likes better to serve her with the enemy. Outside the advantage of gain, he finds there what is honor to him, the honor of betraying. Buttoned up in a borrowed coat, he exhales the more as his proper smell that essence of infection which distinguishes him from the common run of corrupted beings. I know a Giboyer, formerly a conservative journalist, later a republican journalist, to-day a democratic-authoritary journalist, who says of himself, "I am a frank blackguard!" You cannot imagine the feeling he puts into it. I would defy Aristides to say with as much pride, "I am an honest man." His turlutaine is to insult the more the people whose pity he has been able to surprise. He is destined to end in a hospital; he will calumniate the Sisters, and if, before expiring, he can set fire to the building with his short pipe, he will die content. Well! pray God that here and there the bandit may not find means of introducing himself into some Legitimist or Clerical sheet! Déodat had a scent for divining these soldiers of fortune. He has bought them largely; they have hated him largely. This trait of character is fortunately observed in the piece. Giboyer, so large in all the employments of intelligence, displays aversion for the sincere man he is to replace. It is very simple: this sincere man has done a thing which Giboyer can never imitate. My conclusion is that your poet is fulfilling a shabby function: having nothing on his own account for which to meddle with Déodat or with politics, he has followed counsels of whose reason he is ignorant, and embarked in an enterprise whose range he cannot measure.

Couturier — Bow-wow-wow! You admit that this is hardly credible, and explains itself no better than the rest.

D'Aigremont — The democratic instinct so natural in the inferior literature, the desire to please powerful patrons inseparable from that instinct, the penchant for impossible rehabilitations, the hope of a success, the certainty of a great commotion, — all that, joined to absolute ignorance of the true world, explains perfectly what we have here. This piece is a sort of monster without head or tail, which its very father himself would not know how to name; but a growling, howling, rolling monster, full of absurd passion, and really threatening damage enough to frighten even eyes that could not otherwise contemplate him without scorn. Certain minds have only muscular strength as it were, sufficient for this sort of work. Shallow and violent, they are launched; launched, they become

furious before even having received blows. The bull rushes on, stumbles, and bellows.

Marquis — Bulls have been known which have preserved that character.

Couturier — Gentlemen, avowals have escaped you which glorify us. I will point them out. Notice first how you side with the astute Clerical, who circulates all kinds of injurious reports to pollute the innocence of our work; see how you change the situations. You are the aggressors, and you pose as victims. Listen there to the complaints of the author: they are touching, however little French they may be. For, I confess with impartiality, it is not by our French that we shine, at least in the preface.

Marquis — Read us that.

Couturier [*reading*] —

"By what Clerical cunning is there roused against my comedy the anger of parties it does not touch? By what falsification of my words does one succeed in pretending to believe — "

[A few lines and a few italics are omitted here, being ridicule on technical points of French grammar, not translatable.]

Couturier — Don't interrupt! — "succeed in pretending to believe that I attack fallen governments?"

D'Aigremont — Ah, Clerical atrocity!

Couturier — I continue: "Certainly it is adroit tactics to excite against me a chivalrous sentiment which has an echo in all honest hearts — "

Marquis — Excite a sentiment *which has an echo* — and in all honest hearts, too!

Couturier — I continue: "But where are the enemies I strike down? I see them erect *at all the tribunes* — "

Marquis — You are misreading, or rather you are improvising.

Couturier — I am reading: "— at all the tribunes [*sic*]; they are *in train* to escalade the triumphal car. And when I dare, wretched me, to pull them by the legs — "

Count — There's an image for you.

Couturier — "— they turn around crying, 'Respect the vanquished!' Really, it is very amusing."

D'Aigremont — As for me, I find it all very sad. It is the cry of virtue without eloquence: there is nothing more offensive. Nevertheless, after this protestation and this prostration,

we cannot "pretend to believe" that the author is in the least disposed to maintain the combat either against the Academicians, or against the deputies, or against any adversary whatever in readiness to speak. He permits himself to "pull them by the legs," but only for a joke! The one adversary he attacks seriously and with resolution is Déodat, dead and buried. The only obligation to the dead is truth. — Next?

Couturier — Next, take notice of a side touching the old Auberive, and the indirect homage rendered to the aristocracy, since you accuse us of bemeaning it. At first sight the Marquis seems a finished scoundrel. He bears in him all the corruptions of the ancient society, so happily regenerated by the Spirit of '89; he is skeptical, insolent, cynical: but he has a turlutaine, a delicious turlutaine, the same one as Giboyer — paternal love! He loves his daughter, Fernande Maréchal, and all he does is at bottom only to establish her, adopt her, and honestly bequeath his property to her. Fernande, whatever you may say of her, is charming, generous, pure; which again proves our enlarged sentiments. If in the person of the Count d'Outreville we trample on the legitimate children of the aristocracy, in the angelic person of Fernande we lift up its bastards. Ah, gentlemen, we are not so hard to suit! An origin a little irregular, an education purged of all Christian prejudice — we exact no more, and we gladly recognize superior qualities in whoever is not stained with the vices of the past. Pay attention to the fact that by her marriage with Giboyer's son, the Marquis d'Auberive's daughter enters fully into the democracy; thus the old aristocrat becomes the grandfather of the integral and the pure democratic type which is born of this fortunate union. The true democracy, then, will be the legitimate granddaughter of the Marquis d'Auberive and Giboyer.

Marquis — Two dunghills to enrich that lily. How beautiful it will be! This is perfect. This is the true mysticism of democracy, which I proposed to deduce for you: my task is done. Finish avenging your author.

Couturier — It will be very easy. You reproach him with a taste for impossible rehabilitations. In the first place, it is the taste of the public itself, and must be gratified. Secondly, it is all right from the point of view of the democracy. Democracy is a serious thing, because it is a theology. This theology makes man a God, by enfranchising his soul. It promises him, it gives him, universal absolution for all that formerly went on

contrary to rule, to duty, to honor. This is the sense of democratic rehabilitations. The Catholics also like to rehabilitate, but how foolishly they set about it! They rehabilitate institutions or persons damaged by history. Waste papers! all the better to amuse curiosity. We, however, rehabilitate types and groups: the convict, the free damsel, the enfranchised wife, the bastard. We set up a lifting pump that plays every old sewer up to the sky. That is a salutary task, and truly in accordance with the Spirit of '89. These rehabilitations which you pretend are impossible are not only quite possible, but most welcome. We give you here the rehabilitation of bastardy and that of literary tramphood: they answer perfectly. Giboyer the bastard and Giboyer the tramp drag after them in triumph, the one the prejudged Outreville, the other the prejudged Déodat. The bastard pockets the heritage of the legitimate heir; the mercenary tramp carries off the palm of the loyal fighter. When you say that my poet has no spirit —[1]

Marquis — Oh, the Spirit of '89: he is full of that.

Couturier — He has another: that of renouncing the spirit which may be contrary to his period, and the madness of flying in the teeth of the wind. You ask the old morality of him, do you? He could give it, he has given it, and a presentable specimen, which was bought of him for a good price with the virtuous money of Daddy Monthyon. But the public refused that forage, cut in the almost blessed precincts that bloom between the savings bank and the temple of Vesta. What is ten thousand francs paid by the bureau of literary good manners, beside the receipts of "Giboyer's Son"? You were given a first Giboyer, a female Giboyer, a treatise in the old style, with the old wit. It was called "The Adventuress." She is an actress whose turlutaine is to reënter virtue by marrying an old dotard madly in love with her. Her desire is perfectly sincere. But the old man's son comes into view: he is still young and well made, and here is our Giboyeress unfaithful; that is, she wants to be virtuous with the young fellow. The son, — a legitimate son, to be sure, — though not finding himself altogether insensible to the purity of such a flame, recognizes what is due to his father, drives out the princess, and reëstablishes order in the house. There is vivacity there, a certain perfume of language, a touch of poesy, almost two characters, a good enough caricature, a basis of comedy, and lastly too much morality, since the father

[1] *Esprit*, wit. The pun is untranslatable.

is utterly debased before his family. But since after all it is the old virtue that triumphs over interested vice, the success was but ordinary: fifty representations and nothing more. There is what happens with your old-fashioned virtue: a few thousand francs. Let us alone, then! La Bruyère said of Corneille, "*He judged of the goodness of his play only by the money that came to him.*"

D'Aigremont — Out of modesty: the great Corneille thought the public a better judge than himself, and said, "The play brings in money because it is good."

Couturier — We have that in common with the great Corneille — with a slight change, and we say, "The play is good because it brings in money."

Marquis — Spirit of '89.

Couturier — That is true. It reigns, it crowns, it grants.

Marquis — Proceed: you are getting on wonderfully well. We shall be defeated shortly.

Couturier — Do you still say the piece has neither head nor tail, that even the author did not know what name to give it?

D'Aigremont — Yes, I said that. I add that I have laughed heartily at the efforts of the author in his preface to explain what he was trying to do. Barbey d'Aurevilly compares him to an upholsterer who cannot strike a blow with a hammer without pounding his fingers. In truth, he bumps and bruises himself everywhere. He pretends that his piece is not political, it is *social*. What is a *social* piece, and how can a social piece not be political? He tells us nothing about it. This piece, "which is not political and does not make war on any fallen governments," nevertheless attacks all parties that represent the spirit of the old governments; it attacks even the actual government, so far as it is the protector of the temporal power of the papacy, that which primarily constitutes it Clerical. We can name such a ministry in existence which unites the Legitimist Auberive and the Parliamentarian Couturier in "the hate and fear of democracy." And that is not politics?

Couturier — It is not politics "in the current sense of the word."

D'Aigremont — And what is the current sense of the word, Mr. One of the Forty?

Couturier — Oh, you are too curious. See the Dictionary of the Academy.

D'Aigremont — After having floundered about deplorably

on *social* and *political;* after having said, in his tongue, that his non-political piece should be called "The Clericals," if that political vocable were in theatrical currency, — the author discovers all at once his subject: "The antagonism of the *ancient principle* and the *modern principle* — here, then, is the motive of my play. I defy any one to find a word going beyond that *question.*" And *I* defy him to show a word in the play which touches that *question;* I defy him especially to show there either ancient principle or modern principle, or trace of any antagonism whatever toward democracy. I see there only fools and blackguards who are in perfect accord to make this daughter of Giboyer triumph. Where is the struggle? where is the contradiction? where is the obstacle? In this *social* piece, where appears a shadow of the social forces that society opposes to the invasion of Giboyerism? Lift the miserable masks attached with so feeble a hand to the manikins so ill put together, and contemplate the true personages. In place of the Marquis d'Auberive, you have Noailles or Luynes or Des Cars, or the gentleman farmer who lives on his place, helps his poor neighbors, rears his sons for the public service, introduces agricultural improvements, preserves intact his old name and his old residence. In place of the Count d'Outreville, you have the scion of noble stock who has taken the uniform, and maintains on his part the traditions of the old honor under the new flag; you have the brother of St. Vincent de Paul, who holds aloof from the fortunes of his time, but not from its miseries, and studies more closely than you the secret of diminishing them; finally, you have the pontifical Zouave, the soldier of Castelfidardo, — one of those who are the last of the ancient chivalry or the first of the modern chivalry, if modern times are destined to see anything so fine. What a figure would be cut among them by the young Giboyer, son of the folder-girl, pen-flunkey to M. Maréchal, and reader to his good lady to occupy his leisure! And Maréchal, and Couturier de la Sarthe, and D'Aigremont — what names do they bear in the world? They are named Guizot, Broglie, Berryer, Montalembert, Ségur d'Aguesseau. Among all these names which opinion respects by some title at this time, — I say those it respects, and not those it adulates, — you will not find one who would be one of yours. Is it this — that is to say, this entire society — which you profess to attach to Giboyer's car, and profess to vanquish with Giboyer's unpublished book?

Couturier — It will be vanquished, none the less, and by Giboyer.

D'Aigremont — Yes, perhaps, but with the brute force of galley-sergeants ; not with his book.

Couturier — It hardly matters. Nevertheless, the book will not damage the victory, nor our comedy. Our comedy goes to the mark. Its character, which you call indefinable, is so clear and so marked that you have just defined it yourself. If I deigned to defend it in its quality of literary work, I should tell you that it has a perfect head and tail. The head is the first act, the tail is the fifth, and you have no right to be harder to please than the public, which is perfectly contented with this composition. I should say as much of the style and the wit : both of them are of the caliber of the readers of the *Siècle*, understood and applauded through all France, except by the Clericals alone. Much we care for your criticisms ! It is not your tongue : it is ours, and will be that of your children. Modern language for modern principles. You will see plenty of others ! Molière's French has grown old, and we will rejuvenate it by transfusing *argot* into it. Argot, too, has a perfect right to be rehabilitated ! Luckless you who stubbornly persist in a tongue apart ! But let us yield that, like the distinction between social and political. The piece is completely political. We deny it so as not to inflict on the administration the annoyance of stamping the wings of the muse, which would have been "too amusing !" And that political piece is equally social, since it is aimed against society.

D'Aigremont — Then "anti-social" is the expression that would suit.

Couturier — Do me the favor of believing that we knew it ; but there are always prejudices to humor. A slight disguise to assure circulation is not blamable, when no one is deceived. The piece, then, is aimed against society : there is nothing more legitimate, since the question is of making the modern principle triumph, and since society, you have just said, is still established on the ancient principle. Now, what is this ancient principle ? Divine right, the right of God ; the Christian principle, the ecclesiastical principle. Then all the holders of the ancient principle, whoever they be, to such degree as they hold it, are people of the Church, *Clericals*. That *vocable* not being in theatrical currency, it has not been inscribed in front of the piece. Another vocable would have

still better expressed the design and the sentiment of the author; it is said out loud in the tobacco shop next to the theater, and is the true title: "The Calotins."[1] But that would not be compatible with all the delicacies. The piece has been given the name of the typical anti-Calotin, "Giboyer's Son": a bastard probably not much baptized, certainly very much freed from the obligations of baptism; a university colt who has never been embarrassed by any Catholic idea nor blighted by any Catholic sacrament, who will think himself fully married if it is done only at the town-house, and will content himself with the altar of nature. There is the true representative of the modern principle, set free from every link, every relation with the ancient principle; foreign to the old society, to its traditions, to its worship, made to let drop that past which concerns him in nothing, to tread it under foot without pity, without wrath, without even deigning to see what it is. Do you think all that so little linked together and so little logical?

D'Aigremont — No, truly; and it would be all very clear, if only the preface had explained nothing.

Couturier — Who told you the author explained with the design of making things clear? Besides, clear or not, his explanations are as superfluous as your criticisms are vain. He threw you those out of natural timidity, perhaps, or to disembarrass himself from the importunity of your squalls, or to cover a political aim he had too far unmasked. Perhaps too he does not quite know what he has done, and is ignorant himself of the range of his work. These curiosities are hollow: we must look at the aim and the means. Now the aim is clear, the means powerful. Listen to the applauses of the democratic crowd. You despise the crowd, which thoroughly returns it! True, it is only the crowd, but you are only the minority. Reason, protest, cry "calumny"; show your true faces and Giboyer's true face, before which the world and himself would recoil: how does that affect the crowd? You, the honest folk, and he, the scamp — the crowd wants to see you not as you are, but as you are depicted for its pleasure. The masks become the true faces, Giboyer mounts to the Capitol, and — permit me the style of the future — you are wiped out!

D'Aigremont — I am afraid so.

[1] Wearers of the *Calotte*, the priest's cap.

Count — Oh, as for that —

Couturier — Wiped out, I tell you! — I have had for a month the pleasure of seeing Giboyer work at different theaters; I have felt the beast's breath: it is big, it is powerful, and the ramparts it threatens are defended only by its own soldiers. In a discussion on such a subject, we have to borrow words: I borrow a sentence from Voltaire, "A few years more, and the ancient principle will be a fine joke!"

Count — Uncle, are you of that opinion? Can't we fight at all?

Marquis — To be sure! But a little less than now. The entire question lies in knowing whether God will send in his resignation. As to the peoples, they have received theirs and accepted it. The rare individuals who still refuse are what we are, *old fogies*. Recall the names your friend D'Aigremont pronounced just now, and try to find one that exercises a social influence comparable with that of the author of "Giboyer" or the author of "The Old Fogies" ["Les Ganaches"].

Count — What a shame!

Marquis — Ah, yes. As to the importance of these gentlemen, and a crowd of others, it lies not in their merit, but their medal. Let the medal be withdrawn, and the apostolate is ended, and we have to descend a notch, or many, in point of intellectual alimentation. That is what cannot fail to arrive in proportion as democracy *rises*. Other instructors will teach us more formally the rights of democracy and our duties toward that queen. And as these new instructors will be altogether blockheads, there will be a prohibition against replying.

Count — But that is the most insupportable of tyrannies!

Marquis — Oh, the most insupportable! In the matter of tyranny, who indeed can flatter himself that he knows what the human race will endure? This most insupportable tyranny will be only the organization of liberty according to the modern principle, such as the world enjoyed before the advent of the ancient principle: it is a question of expelling. Facts and names are rather muddled up for the service of the democracy! Divine right, which this learned Giboyer characterizes as the *ancient principle*, is of recent social application: it has been in use not fifteen centuries. Up to the moment when it was implanted by Christianity, history is full of nothing but the sayings and doings of human right, the absolute right of man over man. This right was organized perfectly by the marvel whither we are tending — the crowned democracy.

D'Aigremont — That was Nero.

Marquis — It was Caracalla, it was Heliogabalus, it was no matter who; and it went on very well, with poets, men of letters, actors, tribunes, a Senate, consuls, a very brave army, very wise magistrates; with the name of the republic on the moneys and the sovereignty of the people in the protocols. There was an equality which was "not a level," but a succession of levels forming the perfect figure of a hierarchy; only the highest level stopped just at the feet of the emperor: that was equality. The emperor marched at will over all foreheads, raised from the earth to the highest positions, made descend from the highest positions to under the earth, and that for merits or crimes his justice appraised. To each according to his merits! cries the equitable heart of Giboyer; for Giboyer would not be all he should be if he were not a Saint-Simonian too. Who shall legitimately define works, and mete out to them either recompense or punishment? The infallible democracy. But as democracy by itself has nothing but paws, the force of circumstances manufactures for it an omnipotent head, on which it unites the crown and the tiara. And there you have this fine invention of the *crowned democracy*, which gives you at once hierarchy, order, religion, authority, and the treasure of treasures, Equality!

Count — But liberty?

Marquis — Don't you know you must sacrifice something? Liberty is a Christian novelty, incompatible with the noble exigencies of equality. Under the reign of the Gospel, Christianity was a confederation of independences. In place of the Empire, Christianity had constituted the group of nations, free in this atmosphere of general justice which was called the law of nations. In each nation, in place of emperor or proconsul, there was the king, or rather the royalty; a power held in place, as the keystone of an arch is held, by the different parts of the very edifice of which it makes the solidity. Bound to all, royalty depended on all. It was the principal and not the sole head of society. The clergy, the nobility, the magistracy, the corporations, property, formed so many secondary heads which royalty had to obey, but in accordance with a rule, by preserving their legitimate independence and their permanence in the hierarchic rank they occupied. It was complicated. This network offered many obstacles to the circulation of merchandise, vaudevilles, and artillery; but

freedom lived in it! Right always ended by finding some old wall behind which it could fight, wait, and rally the invincible minority of hearts who would not submit to the accomplished fact. '89 has brought order there! Ever since I have been in the world, I have heard disputing as to the gifts which '89 has made or not made to humanity. *I* am satisfied: it has made us a gift I know well, the spirit of servitude. Only, it has enveloped it in the colors of revolt, and given it the name of equality. Ah! how fitting it was that the Duke of Orleans, the great parricide, should take that sobriquet, and that astonishing logic is at the bottom of it all! '89, then, under the name of equality, has cut off all these heads, breached all these ramparts, razed all these old walls where Right found a refuge. All the boundaries are overthrown or shaken, the universal empire is remaking itself in full view; the figures of the crowned democracy stretch forth the hand over the tiara; and Giboyer, admissible to all employments, believes himself, not without reason, the equal of an honest man. But as for liberty, she can prepare herself to take a long nap in the catacombs.

D'Aigremont — If she finds it! The catacombs of modern Society are sewers lighted with gas.

Marquis — Well! liberty will always preserve her last asylum — the scaffold.

Count — Gentlemen, there is something in all this that is not clear to me. I see very well that the Giboyer principle sacrifices liberty, but I ask myself how it saves equality. Of whom is the slave the equal? of a slave like himself. Is equality synonymous with slavery?

D'Aigremont — Haven't you thought over the responses of Giboyer to his boy?

Count — Precisely; and I find them ridiculous.

Marquis — It is true the author is kind in this place!

Count — Gentlemen, allow me to reread you this conversation, which absolutely prevents me from understanding anything about the social thesis of the future. The youthful Giboyer, moved by the speech he has just copied, exclaims: "I believe the only solid basis in the political order, as in the moral order, is faith — there!"

Marquis — "*There!*" delicious "*there!*" If he had said '*ere*, [baby-talk] it would be still finer. The youth is quite right, however.

Count — So it seems to me.

Marquis — What answers the senior Giboyer?

Count — Giboyer senior is stupefied: "*You are a Legitimist at present?*" The youth flinches: "*That doesn't make one a Legitimist.*" "Yes it does," responds Giboyer: "I know but one way of introducing faith into the political domain; that is, to profess that all power comes from God, and consequently owes no accounting except to God. When a man professes that opinion, whatever party he thinks he belongs to, he is a Legitimist." You see that here Giboyer discards the Christian notion of power; as, for that matter, the entire play banishes Christianity entire by showing that it is no longer followed except by hypocrites, intriguers, and fools.

D'Aigremont — Exactly.

Count — The young Giboyer does not object that the society which professed that power comes from God, contrived also that power should render its accounts to God. He does not say that this society, which did itself the honor of not wishing to receive its masters except from heaven, was constituted, amply provided with laws, rules, privileges general and particular, and in a word had taken care that all puissance should not be allowed to all power. The young Giboyer is not sharp.

Couturier — If he said all that, he would lengthen out the scene too much. Besides, it must be arranged to have him beaten. Would you have him wiser than his father? That would be immoral. Be content that he is honester.

Count — Nevertheless, this necessity and this beauty of faith strike him so vividly that he exclaims, "Well, *let it go* that I am a Legitimist."

Marquis — The fluctuation is very fine on the part of a lad whom the deficiencies of his civil status must inspire with so much repugnance for all legitimacy.

Count — Giboyer is bowled over. Life, he says, is stolen from under him. And he hurls at his son, his pupil, these distracted words: "Who has robbed me of you, *cruel boy?* Where did you escape me? *Who has perverted you?* There's a woman back of all this! You are no Legitimist, you're in love!"

Marquis — Eloquent lamentations of a father who sees his son exposed to belief in God.

Count — In despair, Giboyer confesses his amazing infamy, and how he writes speeches not only to prove that he does not believe, but to combat what he believes and vilify what he

adores : " I have dishonored in my person a soldier of Truth, I am no longer worthy to serve her."

Marquis — Consequently I will continue to betray her.

Count — " But I owe her a substitute, and I promised myself it should be you."

Marquis — And by that means, I rehabilitate myself by betraying also those I serve by treason. He is august.

Count — The young Giboyer stands fast : " Your truth is no longer mine ! The one I recognize is the one that dictated your speech." That is the moment to show that all power does not come from God, and how Christianity has cruelly abused humanity by persuading it of that error and the concordant errors, whence is born the monstrosity of the Christian monarchy. But the elder Giboyer, accused of Utopias, confines himself to exhibiting this maxim, rather crumpled by the immoderate use which millions of fools have made of it : " The worst of Utopias is the one that wants to make humanity retrace its steps."

Marquis — Bourdaloue !

Count — The young Giboyer objects that humanity may " mistake the road." He might add that humanity is not an absolutely mindless machine, and that if it is a machine, it is governed by free and intelligent beings. But the big Giboyer, abusing his power, crushes the little one with a second maxim, still more triumphant, " Rivers do not mistake, and they submerge the madmen who try to dam them back."

D'Aigremont — Turlupin !

Count — Thereupon the junior Giboyer breaks down. It does not come into his mind that rivers can be turned aside, dammed, diminished in volume. Decidedly, the boy is weak, in spite of " the *sterling* education " he has received ! Nevertheless he does not surrender. He thrusts at Giboyer a final argument, " In a word, you have nothing to put in place of what you have destroyed."

Marquis — That is very good, too. *In a word*, all the objections of the little rogue are insoluble.

D'Aigremont — But he does not stand fast.

Count — That is not his father's fault ! Giboyer makes him an answer in two parts, which I find doubly priceless. First part : " We have nothing ? And where have you seen *in history* that a society has replaced another without bringing into the world a superior dogma ! " So Giboyer is to furnish us with

something superior to the Christian dogma, definitively discarded. Second part, "Antiquity did not admit equality before either human or divine law: the *Middle Ages* proclaimed it in heaven, '89 proclaimed it on earth." So the superior dogma of the society which is to replace the old society based on the Christian dogma is the Christian dogma of equality! Isn't that laughing at the public?

Marquis — No matter, it is a well-rounded period! I defy *whoever* to obtain tweezers fine enough to unsnarl the Bourdaloue from the Turlupin here. They are fused together.

Couturier — Oh, let the style alone! it is the equalitarian language. Equality would have Bourdaloue become identical with Turlupin. At the moment, take pains rather to discriminate the ideas; do not confound them where they are distinct. The equality of the Middle Ages and the equality of '89 are in no wise the same thing.

Count — Permit me! — It is M. Gibaugier I am speaking to?

Couturier — The same.

Count — Well, your distinction seems to me an empty one. If the equality of '89 is a development of the equality imposed on the pride of man by Christianity, you are mad in wishing to separate from the principle whence alone the equality flows. What is the use of enlarging the canal when you cut off the source? That men may consent to think themselves equal, they must needs avow themselves brothers; to avow themselves brothers, they must believe, they must fear, they must love the same God. I defy you to create belief, love, or fear of a God who is not He from whom all power comes and to whom all power must render account; He who created the heavens and the earth and who died on the cross; He who said to men, "I am your Father and you are my children;" the God Christ, in a word, of whom you will have no more. You will never bring into the world a God superior to Him! But if your equality of '89 is not that which Christ has given us, if it is something else, something which is not divine right and does not grasp the roots of faith in us, instantly your fabric of human equality finds athwart it the pride of the human heart, where formerly the sweetness of Christ made enter the love of the little ones and the poor, and which the fear of Him has restrained. Who is to maintain equality against the pride of man? Force? but that force, that sole guardian of equality, on the one hand swells the pride of its possessors, on the other

obliterates all pride in its victims. And then, it is what was just now said, it is slavery; it is equality under the feet of Cæsar, replacing equality in the bosom of God. *You* make humanity retrace its steps.

Couturier — The argument seems plausible enough; but you forget that the equality "which is not a level" will be saved by "hierarchy."

Count — Yes, Giboyer declares that equality will be the application of the principle "*To each according to his works*," which "is not incompatible with a hierarchy." The little Giboyer objects that the principle is inapplicable: the big Giboyer replies that it is already applied, in part at least; that "the administration, the magistracy, the army, not to speak of the clergy, are actual hierarchies of merit, which have not budged for sixty years, and on which our revolutions have not dreamed of laying a hand — "

Marquis — The fact is, they have contented themselves with putting their foot on them.

Count — He adds this amazing balderdash: "And it is this problem half solved that they dare to proclaim insoluble! Instead of completing the edifice in its provisional parts, they declare it *stricken and vanquished* by decay, and prefer to trust themselves to ruins!" You see I have mastered my author. But may I marry Fernande — after three weeks' widowhood — if I understand a word of it! Humanity is a river, equality is not a level! Equality will be realized by the application of the principle, "To each according to his works;" and there are already mechanisms for its application, which are the administration, the magistracy, and the army, — actual hierarchies of merit! What does all this mean? What have these alleged hierarchies to do here? And these hierarchies, mere ladders on which revolutions effect strange tumbles, what can they secure equality in? And that equality itself, what novelty does it offer if it is not a level? Please satisfy me on these points, M. Gibaugier.

Couturier — You are too curious, Count. But still, as you have sounded the depths of the social comedy, I will try to answer you. Tell me only — if you know — which are the "provisional parts of the edifice"? I don't quite understand that.

Count — They are, I suppose, the parts not yet supplied with the hierarchy of merit which is to introduce equality

there. Property, for instance, seems to me entirely provisional. It is impossible that Giboyer should find it equitably distributed. Inheritance breeds stupidities. It is bad enough that the privileges of mind cannot be prevented from falling at random, without permitting them to found a fortune transmissible in its entirety — and to whom? What, the privilege of genius to be prolonged in favor of an idiot through the privilege of posterity! And that idiot may not only possess it, but transmit it in his turn! And my uncle, subscriber to the "crabs' journal," can leave an estate and investment income to me, — me, an extinguisher, — while Giboyer can only bequeath to the folder-girl's son his immortal manuscript and the honor of his name!

D'Aigremont — That would be unrighteous. So we see the social comedy, prophet of future justice, makes all these heritages fall on Giboyer's grandson.

Count — Very good; but that throws us back into aristocracy. Giboyer's grandson will be a lord as under the old régime, for having put himself to the trouble of being born.

Marquis — Notice that he unites two bastardies, that of his dear papa and that of his dear mamma — which ought to count double, having sprung from adultery. Double or triple bastard — there's merit for you! Something is really owed to such fine quarterings! Still, there is one point there which puzzles me, and makes me think the author has not read Giboyer's book, or that Giboyer has not finished it.

D'Aigremont — That is what I think. In some modern comedy or other, a certain Mercadet, a business Giboyer, schooling some youth he wishes to place, recommends him to call himself a socialist. The youth does as he is told, understands nothing else about it, and yet ends by cutting a figure which impresses the bourgeois and is not displeasing to himself. Our author, so complacent over having written a social piece, to me represents that innocent. He has written a social piece, and it pleases the age well enough, without his being under obligation of deeper knowledge. And why should he take so much trouble, when the bourgeois are impressed? Don't ask him about this or that. He has already answered you: "A *social piece*, hang it!"

Marquis — *Social piece* seems to me stronger than *cream tart*.

D'Aigremont — Incomparably. It answers much better for

everything. *Social* and not *political* piece, "whatever may be said of it;" social piece "which attacks and defends only ideas, *an abstraction made*" (what rubbish!) "from all forms of government —" and all forms of ideas. To be sedulous of forms in government, and of form and logic instead of ideas in social matters, is the vulgar way. The poet hovers. His light descends from supreme heights: see clearly who can. Giboyer is not among the number of those who see perfectly. Giboyer is only a precursor. He still drags about the ideas of the Middle Ages; and like all reformers of his species, who have scarce anything but their own personalities in view, he stops everything short at himself. Progress seems to him perfect when he can see himself in another's place. The Giboyers in the front rank of the hierarchy of merit; no one above them but Cæsar, who will lean on them; the Pope the equal of M. Coquerel; tribunals, an administration, gendarmes, — there you have everybody satisfied. Things go their little accustomed way, and the Giboyer dynasty, solidly established, is perpetuated after the ancient fashion.

Couturier — Well, doesn't this programme seem perfect to you, when you have added the great moral liberty which will result from the democratic theology?

D'Aigremont — Perfect for Giboyer still simple and innocent, and already fed fat with hope; but developments will take place which Giboyer does not count on. We can foresee that there will be an age limit for proprietorship and family headship, as for the military, the magistracy, and other functionaries. Logic will have it, equality exacts it, the slope is in that direction. The proprietor and the father of a family will have very little veneration, once despoiled of the guard of Christian virtues in them and around them! By what right is this paltry individual to be owner, director, and master for a long lifetime, to the detriment of those who are waiting? It is worthy of modern civilization to extend its empire even thus far, to regulate up to the very chances of fate and natural gifts, to introduce equality there. I defy you, the point of departure being given, to find that idea as impracticable as your Christian prejudices make you think at first sight. You will not be permitted to overstep a certain limit of fortune, nor enjoy it past a certain age. You will not be permitted to be superior in an art or a science. The ignoble impetus of envy will become the all-powerfulness of the law. Labor has already been very

efficaciously spent in realizing the level of characters: means will be found of procuring that of minds, of aptitudes, of geniuses. Gratuitous and obligatory education will do that; administrative regulations will perfect the work, and accomplish the subjugation and planing down of nature. What masters the world is a genius of incomparable stucco, the idiotic genius of equality. To-morrow, Giboyer will be a derided reactionary. Out of a new upheaval of equalitarian mud will spring a new Giboyer, who will scorn ours, and treat him as a dweller in the Middle Ages, a dullard still Christian. The future is Bedlam: it harbors treasures of abject silliness. Every one at birth will be thrown into the mill, stamped out with a die, put under the roller to make part of the infamous mechanism, and be able to receive no other destination. Intelligences will function as servilely as hands.

Couturier — You think yourself in China.

D'Aigremont — No, M. Gibaugier, I am in the Forum; I have the Imperial City under my eyes. Have you seen an infant school? There are children there of three or four who march, manœuvre, sing, stop, keep silence, to a whistle. It is a little regiment already. No more volition, no more spontaneity. When a turbulent genius manifests itself that makes the others laugh, — that is, distracts them, — he is immediately enveloped, extinguished, machinized. Make the infant school obligatory, — equality wills it: at the end of a few years you will no longer meet in the whole empire a solitary breaker of street lamps, nor a man to permit himself anything whatever that may displease the political power. We shall have men bold in all that authority ordains them, heroes and gymnasts who, naked, will scale fortresses bristling with cannon, but who will recognize nothing outside of authority, — neither fathers nor brothers nor God; and will feel themselves as crippled as if they had lost a limb from the moment they lose sight of their corporal or their policeman. And there will be no more art. The artist must produce a permit to have the right to sketch a lithograph; but if he has his permit, if he is in the hierarchy, he may paint temples whatever his merit: and woe to him who presumes to criticise the state painter! The same with men of letters: the success of a play, a book, an ode, will be made as a deputy is made. The certified author will go through victorious: he will have universal suffrage on his side.

Count — What frightful chimeras!

D'Aigremont — They are not chimeras: we are grazing the edge of reality.

Marquis — There is one thing very certain: that what the unsoundest heads have proposed of the maddest kind, we have seen take on a body and in a few years oppress the public reason.

D'Aigremont — Notice the profound disdain, the impudence, the ignorance with which to-day are treated the principles that have been steadily insulted for twenty-five or thirty years. Not to name too many authors, and not to multiply examples, take only the tranquil blasphemies of our social comedy. It has them against marriage, against the family, against society. It is not what is called "a thinker" who speaks in this way; it is a man of the world, who brings to the theater in all simplicity the language of the companies he frequents. Companies not very vulgar, because he is the point of contact between two greatnesses which do not love each other, but which feel in him what they have in common.

Marquis — Ah! the spirit of equality —

D'Aigremont — All this proves that the author, who seems to you taking pains to revolt the public conscience, does not even dream of it. Nothing suggests to him that he is wounding any living thing. Giboyer junior, the pure, finding himself loved by Fernande, cries out with fine taste, "Long live the good God!" He says it as he would say anything else, without meaning to be coarse and without purposing to surprise any one. It is the calm language of victory. Giboyer candidly takes the counter side from Christianity. If you wish to get an idea of the Giboyer civilization, start from that.

Marquis — You see, my poor dear boy, you who love liberty so much, — and you are right, — there are two spirits which must be obeyed in the world: the spirit of truth and the spirit of lying. Ingenious persons profess to be on the point of inventing a third, which will be composed of the first two: they are mistaken, and this pretended third spirit is only the spirit of falsehood, which is lying to them. The spirit of truth alone renders us free: the spirit of lying enslaves us. But we love it. When I say "us," I am speaking of our unhappy race. Falsehood has always known how to prepare a bread which we have found pleasing: *Suavis est homini panis mendacii.* You desire explanations as to the equalitarian hierarchies, and our friend Gibaugier is in no hurry to give them. To complete

M. d'Aigremont's remarks, I will confess that these hierarchies produce on me the effect of an optical illusion, designed to preserve distinctions under the name of equality; as universal suffrage, the press, the tribune, and a quantity of other mechanisms, suitably disposed and regulated, seem to me designed to preserve power, and more than power, under the name of liberty. All these new names cover old things as well. Yet the name is not all that is new. These old things themselves have returned to the antique fashion, and that is what makes their novelty. Not every one is capable at first glance of recognizing faces that have been lost to sight for fifteen or eighteen hundred years. To-day pagan liberty and Cæsarian equality present themselves with an air of freshness.

Couturier — What more is needed?

Count — Gentlemen, you may joke: for my part, I am not so easy in mind. All this frightens and angers me. What! is the abjectness of the pagan world what we are going toward?

D'Aigremont — My young friend, we are no longer going: it is a long time since we set out, and we are there. The waves alone are floating us into port. Ah, the good people who tell you humanity does not retrace its steps! They would seem quite right, did we not know that God reserves the last word for Himself. During long ages, humanity, yielding to its divine guide, and sometimes even inflamed with love for Him, truly seemed and truly wished to retrace its steps. It abandoned slavery, idolatry, the worship of flesh; it let itself be turned back from the gulf, it advanced toward the eternal springs. But the effort quickly exhausted its virtue. Wearied out, it rejected the guide that was showing it heaven. He persisted, it struck him; he still persisted, it bound him; and letting go the oar and furling the sail, gave up endeavor on the slope of the river of death. Here it is back again, proud of itself, on the brink of the gulf where the anchor of salvation had arrested it.

Count — No, we shall not fall in there; no! The anchor of the Cross will save us anew; we shall still retrace our steps. We will not cast into the gulf, at the bidding of actors, honor, liberty, equality, all the gifts of our Christ. There will be a revolt of Christian blood against this project of eternal infamy!

D'Aigremont — I wish so. The revolters will not be numerous.

Count — Undeceive yourself. Outside of our ranks, more

hearts than you think for remain attached to that liberty which is being sacrificed. Are not impatience of the bridle, love of independence, the very characteristic of modern times?

D'Aigremont — One moment! In the luminous discussion between the two Giboyers, the father lays the blame on the "confusion of tongues." He is not far wrong. This certain sign of the decay of reason is visible everywhere, and Giboyer will provide no remedy, for it is his great means of success. As for us, let us follow to the end the counsel of St. Paul: preserve religiously the sanctity of words, which deeply concerns the sanctity of the mind. There is liberty and liberty. One of them was marked out formerly, whose sectaries were named, in good French, the *libertines*. That is not Christian liberty, which rescued the world by refusing to worship the gods of Cæsar, and which developed equality by limiting itself through respect for the liberty of others. You say justly that the characteristic of the age is the hatred of the bridle and love of *independence*. Now, here is the trouble: the austere Christian liberty is not independence; on the contrary, it is a bridle. What do I say? it is *the* bridle. A bridle on the heart, a bridle on the mind, a bridle on the senses, a bridle on the whole man. If you hear a man spoken of as *unbridled*, does it give you the idea of an honest man? One would not say that even of Giboyer to do him honor. Yet what is Giboyer? An intelligent man who has thrown off the bridle, a vicious man who has made himself independent. But since vice must be honored, what has been done? A new twist of the tongue has been given. *Independent*, equivalent to *unbridled*, has become a synonym of "free," with something bolder and more honorable in it. Confusion of tongues, ruin of good sense! After having in his independence given being to the folder-girl's son, Giboyer, a dependant of hunger, practices the trades that you know; among others that trade of prisoner, which is not the vilest. Later, no one knows why, this independence becomes the slave of the paternal sentiment. He draws from the gutter the Moses of the democracy; he rears him by imposing ignoble labors on himself, but he has the honor of not resuming the divine bridle: rather ignominy than obedience, rather the convict guard than the angel guardian! As a virtue, this would be dependence: he has no virtue, he has a *turlutaine* which leaves him independent. This is all quite in keeping. A virtue might induce him to fashion only an honest man; with a

caprice, he is almost assured of making an object like unto himself, an *independent* who will belong to himself, who will not be *stolen* from him, — that is, will never believe in the right of God.

Marquis — There are currents of inspiration in the air which reveal themselves in a very strange manner. When Giboyer says to his son, "Who has stolen you from me, cruel boy?" he utters a sentence which was given forth by M. Proudhon. I read a booklet of his wherein he threatened to kill the priest who should attempt to *steal* one of his children from him, by interfering to baptize him.

D'Aigremont — Nothing more natural — in the unnatural order men are laboring to form. And all who are busying themselves with it must reach the same expression of the generatrix thought. To submit in no wise to the right of God, that is the serious basis of everything, the rock of philosophical liberty. The pride of man accepts no matter what humiliation, no matter what livery, no matter what chain: he will be a lackey, he will be a procurer, provided he may free himself from a personal and living God — that specter of the conscience, well says the same Proudhon. And truly, freed from God in himself, and no longer meeting him with others, man is God himself, whatever be the abjectness into which Fate has let him fall; he is God in every place where he finds himself strongest, whether by the vigor of his members or by the adroitness of his mind. Then he cheats, he steals, he crushes — he is free!

Marquis — Add that, even when reduced to servitude and in total impotence, philosophic independence does not abandon him: on one side, he emancipates himself from that irksome law of God that commands him to respect his masters, to pardon them, and to pray for them; on the other, he gives himself the precious right to hate, curse, and avenge himself.

D'Aigremont — Do you wish now for a precise definition of material independence, and will it please you to know just what it is worth? Listen to the sordid Giboyer. He comes back to it twice, as he does to that fine metaphor of licking the mud off his son's road, forgetting it is with that mud-laden tongue he is making court to him. In the first act he is speaking of going to America: — "If I go out there, at the end of six years I can bring back Maximilien three thousand francs yearly income, — *that is to say*, INDEPENDENCE." In the third act, he

is editor-in-chief of the Clerical organ, finds himself rich, and presses Maximilien to leave his position. — We have, he says, a thousand francs a month. Maximilien, already not so simple, answers that that is not wealth. "Anyway," rejoins Giboyer, "it is INDEPENDENCE." The noble Maximilien makes no objection. Thus, for Giboyer fresh as for Giboyer gamy, independence is three thousand francs invested income at the lowest; and if you have a turlutaine, a thousand francs a month. In other words, it is the power of living without work, or of not working except at attractive labor. At present, my young friend, I exhort you to fight, and die if need be, for liberty and equality; you cannot make a better use of your life. But do not count more than moderately on the concurrence of those who love independence — and don't tell them your secrets.

Marquis — Is that your sentiment, M. Gibaugier?

Couturier — Listen, I have done my best to bring out the democratic and social sense of the work: I have not taken an engagement to console you. I now hand in my resignation as judge-appointed counsel, and have nothing more to say to you except Pelissier's words,[1] "If you are not satisfied, appeal to the Emperor." But you, my Lord Marquis, have promised to show us a certain admirable something in this production of the current spirit. It seems to me the moment has come.

Marquis — It has come, indeed, with the accord on which I always counted, and I have only a résumé to make. But let me present to you first an idea which came to me just now while listening to M. d'Aigremont. In the month of May last, while on my way to Rome, I stopped a short time with our dear friend of Marseilles. He conducted me to his country-house, deep in flowers under the clear shadow of the pines. The beauty of the place is not unknown to you: you remember those rocks, that sea, from that solitude to the city gates. A chalet, but of marble; a castle terrace, the Mediterranean beneath the eyes, the hills in the distance: two horizons, the one of black points cut on the azure, the other of vague blues softly moving in the golden mist.

Count — I passed the month of December there, and it was delicious.

Marquis — That is nothing. The place must be seen in spring raiment. No one can imagine what riches the first sun of May scatters there, and what perfumes it sets burning.

[1] On prohibiting the representation of "Giboyer's Son" in Algeria.

Accustomed to the tranquil opulence of oaks and grass, my Northern eyes were astonished. This nature is impetuous, like the man of the South, prodigal of deeds, of speeches, of vocal outbursts; tempests and songs. Long boughs spring out from the least indentations of the stone; they group themselves in clusters, twine in garlands, spread out in draperies; everything sparkles with flowers, all the flowers shed around their puissant aromas. Purple, gold, emerald, azure, snow; the symphony of colors is as full and strong as the harmony of perfumes. You are seized through all the senses at once. I asked our friend how he had managed not to pass his life in idling.

Count — Faith, uncle, your description makes me wish to return there for that sole object, and also to be guaranteed against the aspect of Giboyer, who should not remove far from the tobacco shops.

Marquis — Our friend replied that he knew well this propensity to do-nothingness. He added, smiling, that the delicious country-house hardly served as the goal of promenade. Built by the enthusiasm of youth, ornamented by the enthusiasm of art, and at last found too beautiful, it is practically abandoned. Men do not reside there on account of business; women no not wish to sojourn there because the church is too far off to have mass every day. Mass, which is the strength of poverty and the joy of easy circumstances, is the necessity of opulence. The day would be empty without that. There is what life teaches to Christians who grow old on roses.

D'Aigremont— Giboyer has no suspicion of it.

Marquis — There are so many things Giboyer has no suspicion of! As for me, reflecting on this, it seems to me that I have just touched the enduring root of the Eastern Question and of many other questions. In the Orient, the temptation to idle has been victorious. Man has lain in the shade, among the flowers, sword in hand; and, surrounded by trembling slaves and full of vices, he has dreamed away, full of fatigue and ennui. He has dreamed of delights more enervating, more silent; always spring, always moonlight, always young! There is the dream. During the dream the sword has fallen from the hand of the dreamer; and one day some one has come from the West to bring him not waking, but death. The slaves have remained, they have kissed the feet of the victors, soon themselves enfeebled and conquered by the Oriental dream.

Other Occidentals have come, have melted away, have attracted other invasions: all is engulfed in the bed of flowers. Rome has lain there, and with her the world. What would come if Christianity had not created a new Rome? What would come if that second Rome disappeared before the Koran of Giboyer? The decadence of mankind would begin again at the point where Christianity interrupted it; matter would recover its empire; the human race would be absorbed in nature and perish there.

D'Aigremont — I believe it; and I even believe that consummation would come very quickly, seeing the abundance and vigor of the elements of destruction.

Marquis — Christianity alone holds us upright, by its perpetual repudiation of effeminacy and slavery. But it must be integral Christianity, that which gives us the real presence of the living God, the living word of the present God. Christianity breached by heretics is only a philosophy. It is powerless to combat that invasion of nature which finds in us so many ardent complicities. Liberty, dignity, so salutary and necessary, — Christianity must oppose them to us and above all impose them on us; and it alone will do it, and it alone can do it. It would be nothing to prohibit us from having slaves, we must be prohibited from being such. They say the noblest aspiration of man is toward liberty: yes, and his most violent inclination is toward slavery! He wishes to reduce others to it, he precipitates himself into it. The great business of man is to find a master. At what price does he not buy one? What sacrifices does he not make for it? *Thou shalt have no other God but God!* there is the first article of the divine law, and the first, the broadest, the only solid substratum of human liberty. That is what Giboyer effaces with scorn, under the name of divine right. Giboyer is not proposing so new a thing as he thinks. Read Scripture, and see the efforts of God against idolatry, the generating principle and the complement of slavery; listen to the anathemas of Isaiah and the other prophets against the frenzy of making idols, and going to adore them under the terebinths, in the obliging shadows of the night! Idolatry carries away everything: it reigns through the whole world, it reaches the perfection of prostrating the human race before an idol of flesh. The God Octavius was embarrassed with it, the God Tiberius was disgusted with it: "O men made for slavery!" The others were no longer surprised by

it, thought no more of it. The God Claudius thought it very simple to have altars. The true God triumphed through His Christ; the divine commandment overthrew the infamous idol, and liberty was born. But idolatry has preserved temples on the earth, and the leaning toward slavery has remained in the heart of man. Rarely will it show itself there at once more skillful and more overflowing than to-day. It calls itself liberty, fraternity, equality. The "father of lies," father of slavery, is never embarrassed for want of false names! Whatever figure is given to the idol, the idolatry is easy to recognize; whatever name the spirit of slavery takes, its work against liberty is easily guessed. See your old liberals of the press and the tribune in view of Italy and Poland. Your humanitarians, your equalitarians, your fraternitarians, how all that mass has become "authoritarian" and tranquilly sees human flesh carved up! How it all frankly battens on apostasy! Are they rather indulgent to every work of robbers and executioners, rather deaf to every cry of the victims? Do you believe they can ever be revolted, and that the fecund spirit of tyranny can manage to invent an outrage which will decide them to compromise their personal "independence" of five hundred or a thousand francs a month? There they are, these *lads* who would eat a martyr for a modest compensation! Without increase of wages, for nothing, for pleasure, for honor, if the executioner judges it opportune that the martyr shall be defamed, they are ready! Let the spirit of slavery alone: should it succeed in depriving Christianity of the character of a social institution, and reduce it to being nothing more than a philosophy, very soon Claudius will have priests, and very soon the Giboyer breed itself, crouching under the rod, will cultivate ill-gotten gardens for others. Ah, Giboyer, my friend, you write speeches against the temporal power of the Papacy, to advance the triumph of equality and to acquire "an independence" which will permit you not to be an honest man. You will be disappointed, Giboyer! Your son will be reduced to equality just like us, or will finish by paying Peter's Penny like us, because if he does not know that the Pope guards his soul, he will be forced to understand at least that the Pope guards his cash-box and his house.

Couturier — Thank you, Marquis, for this philosophy of history. It is not what the *Revue des Deux Mondes* teaches me. M. Buloz's people do not think they need Christ as much

as you. They think, on the average, they can arrange everything without him. M. Buloz has his points of view, you have a perfect right to have yours. Just now I wish to know Giboyer's merits.

Marquis — You have described them almost all yourself, my dear friend, and I doubt whether the author would have rated them at a higher figure, in public or private. First, gentlemen, let us render justice to the name "Giboyer." I admire it very sincerely. They are making us a new French, which — pardon the expression — talks all by itself, and brings us savors that noble idiom seemed incapable of harboring. *Giboyer!* We also have *The Ganaches*. What titles for comedies! There is no need even of going to see them. You feel, that is to say, you know at once what they will be about. There is the nineteenth century, there is scorn, derision, debasement of language, a certain sign of other debasements; in a word, there is democracy! This name *Giboyer* added to the French of the future, I call a stroke of genius. There is potency in it. Confess that the most wholesale enemy of modern innovations and all their promises could not better have baptized the human type of these hateful charlatanries. Formerly a Frenchman was called Jacques Bonhomme or Montmorency: at present he is Giboyer; *Maximilien* Giboyer! Note the given name, which is Robespierre's: through that, Giboyer is linked to the fathers of '93. If this feature was not meant, it is there. Now the piece is full of features of this kind, which go straight against the intentions of the author. That is the grand merit I see in it. From one end to the other the author has had the inspirations of Balaam, with this difference: that Balaam, sent to curse, blessed; while he, who wishes to bless, curses. He is the Balaam of democracy: he belittles it, befouls it, and renders it hateful. He makes it the daughter of Giboyer, the bastard of Giboyer, infected in its source, ignoble in its manners and its language, silly in its conceptions, incapable of withstanding the shock of reasoning. He gives it only a ridiculous triumph, a victory over puppets. Like the devil, he carries away none but lost souls, — an old rake, an old fool; he carries them off, he does not conquer them: they belonged to him already, the one by his vices, the other by his imbecility. If I had been tempted by democracy, the reading of this piece would have saved me. It is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the amazing intellectual and moral wretchednesses of the democratic school, and the still

shining superiorities of Christian society, even in the state of decadence to which it has fallen. I know too well that this demonstration will be wasted on the great public, that it will not comprehend, that so many incredible avowals will not open its eyes. Couturier has told us rightly: the mob is in it, with its unwillingness to see things except in that falsehood and that absurdity in which the courtiers of the democracy take care to show them to it, to humor its jealousy. No matter, the demonstration is perfect for me, for us; and I think there are still some proud souls it will enlighten and fortify against the violence of the democratic torrent.

D'Aigremont — Do you really expect it?

Marquis — Yes. I see more than one spirit, upright but troubled by the evils of the time, to whom Giboyer will be salutary. I will go farther, and to express my entire feeling to you by a Giboyer metaphor, I regard all this as an abscess which is breaking on the outside. It is ugly, it is afflicting, I admit; but the broken spot is wholesome. Success is a formidable thing to the human conscience. Numbers of honest men are always tempted to believe that successes repeated, shining, durable, cannot but repose on a foundation of justice; that everything victorious is of necessity endowed with genius and even virtue, that every triumphant idea bears in itself the true and the great. Well, there; look; see *what they have in their belly:* another fine metaphor of this age, to express whence come and whither tend the aspirations of modern man, and another feature of ancient origin! The philosophers hostile to new-born Christianity had something too, and even everything, in their bellies. St. Paul said of them, "*Whose god is their belly.*" But indeed, there are men left who have something in their hearts and their heads. The brutal shock stirs up, angers, inflames this something Christian. In truth, there is something irritating in it, because the action is full of violence and insult; but as after all there is no dishonor in being harried by the police, my judgment is that we ought rather to thank the police-hand that buffets us with this morsel of authorized literature. Ah! is *there* the best you have to offer us against our principles? is there your art, is there your language, are those your ideas and your social conceptions? Thanks a thousand times, and we are charmed to have the basis of your views and your counsels! Well, but, all shattered as we are, all dismantled by your victories, all perverted by your

examples, frivolous, forgetful of our duties, miserably dazzled by your fortunes, miserably led astray by your entertainments, we are still worth more than you, and we are intellectually and morally stronger. We cherish a deposit of living and august truths which your insolences but further endear to us. Your Giboyer, your pontiff, your saint, whom yourselves proclaim a blackguard, is no doubt a blackguard, and that physiognomy alone, for which we do not know how to thank you enough, spoils him for us; but he has another slight defect which you do not perceive: he is a dunce, this fine genius! He knows English, he can write in many tongues, he can plead pro and con, he can lick the mud off his son's steps, but he cannot clean the mud off his own heart: he is a dunce! He could write a fine book, he could not become an honest man; he can force the people who buy him to pay more for him, he is ignorant of the art of forcing them to honor him, he has no hold there, and his own son honors him only on the ground of having been produced by him: he is a dunce! He can gain an independence of three thousand francs a year, but his pupil already needs an independence of a thousand francs a month: he is a dunce! He turns mute, ticket taker, puts the Clerical chain around his neck, — he, a democrat, — when he has all he needs, without changing his style or his linen, to earn his living on the Belgian papers of his natural stripe: he is an absolute dunce! This Diogenes clad in dirt talks to us of organizing equality, as if he himself, in order to be everybody's equal, had anything to do but take a bath! I ask of you if it needs so much talent and honesty to make a personage? But no, Master Giboyer must cherish his odor and his apparel; he means to enter the Senate in working clothes, and without being obliged to leave his pipe with the sergeant-at-arms! — I tell you he is a dunce, and that it will be perceived.

D'Aigremont — Alas! I doubt it.

Marquis — I augur better of the world. We have spoken our thought of it freely enough: things occur there which I see and hold in abhorrence. Nevertheless, I do not mark there the supreme and decisive character of death, inertia of good. After all, the epoch has life; and that struggle which comedy cannot show, exists.

D'Aigremont — I don't know. I doubt whether we shall make a brilliant figure in history. Undertakings are not lacking, I admit, nor parade, nor hubbub. We excite ourselves

greatly, or at least we are very much stirred up by very powerful machines. There are bustle, smoke, cantatas — mirlitons.[1] The plaster assumes grandiose forms ; it rises, it rises ! You hear at intervals immense hullabaloos, tempests of acclamations, gusts and hurricanes of laughter. Are there works finding accomplishment, doctrines in collision, solutions being wrought out ? Is it life, or is it nothing ? In this throng you need a magnifying-glass to discern a face ; in this uproar you need an ear-trumpet to hear a voice. For an instant you turn away your gaze from the plaster which was just now reared aloft : the eye returns thither and sees it no more. It was an illusion of a structure, its fall has produced the illusion of a collapse. On to another ! Will our fecundity, which a great voice has called fecundity of abortions, bring forth at last anything but illusions ? Will our industry leave us even ruins ? Questions ! Booths arise on all sides ; we rush to them with an eager desire to be amused. Are we amused ? A question ! A terrible question ! At bottom, the human species, confined no longer by faith, but by threads of iron, and crowded together before the same spectacles, is no more satisfied with its buffoons than with its great men : it despises and is bored. Beware ! There is something more dismal than the bellowing of the people, and that is its yawning. All may end by a terrible slumber on a terrible ruin.

Marquis — I don't say no. It will be as God wills. He has weighed the repentances and the hardenings, the good purposes and the bad actions, the prayers and the blasphemies. I appeal to that Judge, for the nations of the earth as for myself. To each according to his works ! To die of Giboyer would be a villainous death. It is possible, and it would be deserved. Yet even in this situation, I say the author of "Giboyer" does us honor and may do us good. He does us honor in defaming us. He is constrained to defame us, to show us other than we are, and finally to confront us with his hero to abase us before him. With the characters that observation might furnish him, if he took the champions of the "ancient principle" as they are, his piece would be no longer possible, any more than with his hero such as he is in nature. In vain he undervalues and derides the old virtue of the ancient régime : he has to have a Giboyer who holds to that virtue, and in whom the *turlutaine* produces certain effects of the old

[1] See note, page 133.

repentance ; who could turn father after having forgotten for six years that he was one ; who even wished to be a husband, and was prevented only by the death of the folder-girl ; who is laborious, sober, devoted, all that the Giboyer *nature* would not be, cares nothing for being, and is not. This therefore cannot but be useful to us, by proving to us that our old virtue still has some good in it, since Giboyer is only presentable on condition of bearing at least the reflection of it. Let us sedulously gather up the vaticinations of the most recent prophet of the democracy, and persuade ourselves fully that in spite of the discredit with which honest people may seem stricken before him, he still has to resemble them in some fashion to obtain their homages. Assuredly the creator of Maximilien Giboyer, reared to become the delight of the human race — and to pettifog before justices, or do publishers' copying at forty francs a sheet in a garret, or serve as secretary to the deputy Maréchal, — assuredly, I say, the creator of this jewel would not be willing to aver that he despises Fitz-James and La Bourdonnais, naval second lieutenants ; or Crussol, Gitaut, and a hundred other cavalry second lieutenants ; or Sanbran, Rohan-Chabot, Gontaud-Biron, Puységur, Tournon, La Guiche, De Maistre, Renneville, and all the papal soldiers I could name, although these Clericals, the majority educated by M. de Sainte-Agathe, were provided with a legitimate father. I fancy also that Vogüé, though great in Spain and absolutely incapable of making a speech against the temporal power, would not seem to him over rash in opposing his book on the Holy Land to the publishers' work of the younger Giboyer. What shall I tell you ? I go as far as to believe, in a word, that the Balaam of the democracy, when he shall sit in our political assemblies, will not vote for the exclusion of whoever shall have married a woman before having issue by her, or shall not have left his solitary son to knock about anywhere and everywhere for at least six years. Well, with that and the first communion, we can maintain ourselves and do something yet. We can at least manage to sow seed. My dear D'Aigremont, even should we limit our hopes to that, let us profit by Giboyer's stumblings, and do *not* let us fall into democratic manners. [*To the* COUNT.] You especially, my dear boy, will witness spectacles probably spared to my eyes, — I have seen enough already ! — keep pure and preserve from weevils the grain which will be buried only to cover the earth with an abundant harvest.

Count — Make yourself easy, uncle. Giboyer does not allure me and does not make me afraid. Without being too presumptuous, I feel myself of courage and even of stature to confront him everywhere.

Couturier —

"We shall not die alone, nor be unfollowed."

Count Hugues, when you were a very little child, and I a very little superintendent in the iron-works of your uncle, who persisted in making my fortune, I predicted that you could not be prevented from carrying a musket.

Marquis — Oh, here! why don't they call us to dinner?

[*Bell rings.*

Maximilien [*drunk*] — Your Lordship, it's there.

Marquis — What do you mean by "It's there"?

Maximilien — Why, it's there on the table. Dinner's ready, that's it.

Count — He is drunk.

Marquis — Maximilien, have you seen Father Giboyer today?

Maximilien — What's he say he's my father for! — It ain't my fault. — I've got to see my father, for he says he give me my education.

Marquis — I ordered you every time you had seen Father Giboyer to go to bed, and not appear before me again till the next day.

Maximilien — And how about my work? I've got to get that done! I won't steal my wages!

Marquis — You see, gentlemen, everywhere the old principles. Oh, Giboyer hasn't put an end to them! [*To* MAXIMILIEN.] Go to bed. And, gentlemen, let us go to dinner.

[*They go out.*

Maximilien [*alone*] — Old duffers! — For all that, he's got no sense, him that calls himself my father. He makes me drink evenings, and that gets me caught. — And it's always me that pays for it! I don't think that's right.

SOCIETY WHERE THEY ARE BORED.

By ÉDOUARD PAILLERON.

(Translated for this work.)

[ÉDOUARD PAILLERON, the most conspicuous of contemporary French dramatists, was born at Paris, September 17, 1834. He began his mature life as a notary's clerk, and did not make literature a profession till 1860, when he produced a volume of satires in verse, "The Parasites," and a one-act comedy, "The Parasite." "The Partition Wall," verse comedy, followed in 1861, and "The Last Quarter" (of a wedding trip), ditto, in 1863, with good success. "The Second Movement," verse comedy, was coolly received in 1865; but in 1868, "Society where they Amuse Themselves," one-act prose, was beautifully costumed and quite successful. "False Households," verse drama, came in 1869; "Hélène," ditto, in 1872; "The Other Motive," prose comedy, in 1872; "Little Rain," prose comedy, in 1875; "The Sparkle" and "The Ungrateful Age," prose comedies, in 1879; "Chevalier Trumeau," verse comedy, 1880; "During the Ball," verse comedy, 1881; then in 1881 his masterpiece, still holding the stage, "Society where they are Bored," which gave him the election to the Academy in 1882. He followed it with "The Narcotic," verse comedy, 1882, and "The Mouse," prose comedy, 1887; and then nothing more of moment till 1893, when "The Cabotins" [barn-stormers] repeated the sensation of "Society where they are Bored." Since then he has produced nothing but in 1896 two short comedies illustrating maxims of conduct, known in France as *proverbes*. He had previously written several volumes of poems, and in 1886 "Academic Discourses." He married a daughter of François Buloz, the founder of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and wrote several articles for it.]

ACT I.

Scene: A square drawing-room with door at the rear opening on another large drawing-room. Doors in the first and third wings. On the left, between the doors, a piano. Door at the right in the first wing; on the same side, higher up, a large bay with glazed vestibule giving on the garden; on the left, a table with a chair on each side; on the right, a small table, and a sofa, chairs, etc.

SCENE I.

François [*searching through the papers that load the table*] — It can't be on top of that either; nor inside of that: *Revue Materialiste — Revue des Cours — Journal des Savants —*

Enter LUCY WATSON.

Lucy — Well, François, have you found that letter?

François — No, Miss Lucy, not yet.

Lucy — Opened, no envelope, on pink paper?

François — Was Miss Watson's name on it?

Lucy — Did I tell you it was to me?

François — But —

Lucy — Then you haven't found anything?

François — Not yet, but I'll hunt, I'll inquire —

Lucy — No, don't inquire: there's no need of it! Only keep hunting, for I must have it. From the place where you handed us the letters this morning as far as the drawing-room. It can't have dropped anywhere else — search! search!

Scene II.

François [*alone, returning to the table*] — "Search! search!" *Revue Coloniale! Revue Diplomatique! Revue Archéologique* —

Enter Paul *and* Jeanne Raymond.

Jeanne [*gayly*] — Ah, there's somebody! [*To* François.] Is Mme. de Céran —

Paul [*pressing her hand, whispers*] — Hush! [*To* François, *with dignity.*] Is the Countess of Céran in the château at present?

François — Yes, sir.

Jeanne [*gayly*] — Well, go and tell her that M. and Mme. Paul —

Paul [*same performance, coldly*] — Have the kindness to notify her that M. Raymond, sub-prefect of Agenis, and Mme. Raymond have arrived in Paris, and await her in the drawing-room.

Jeanne — And that —

Paul [*as before*] — Hush! [*To* François.] Go on, my good fellow.

François — Yes, M. Sub-Prefect. [*Aside.*] They are just married. [*Aloud.*] Will M. Sub-Prefect take off his things?

[*Takes the guests' coats and wraps and goes out.*

Jeanne — Oh, come! Why, Paul —

Paul — Not "Paul" here; "M. Raymond."

Jeanne — What? Thou wishest —

Paul — Not *thou* here: *you*, I told you.

Jeanne [*laughing*] — Oh, such a face!

Paul — No laughing here, please.

Jeanne — Really, sir, are you going to scold me?

[*Throws her arms around his neck; he disengages himself in terror.*

Paul — Bad girl! it only needed that!

Jeanne — Oh, you make me weary!

Paul — *Pre*-cisely! That time you struck the note! Come now! have you forgotten all I told you on the railroad?

Jeanne — I thought you were just joking.

Paul — Joking! in this place? Look here, do you want to be Madame Prefect: yes or no?

Jeanne — Yes, if it gives thee [1] pleasure.

Paul — Well, look here, please; look here, thou — I still say *thou* sometimes, because we are alone; but shortly, before folks, it will be *you* all the time — *you!* The Countess of Céran has done me the honor to invite me to present my new wife to her, and to pass some days at her St. Germain château. Now Mme. de Céran's salon is one of the three or four most influential salons of Paris. We are not here to amuse ourselves. We come in as sub-prefect, we must go out as prefect. Everything depends on her, on us, on thee!

Jeanne — On me? How on me?

Paul — Certainly. The world judges a man by his wife. And it is right. And that's why you must be on your guard! Gravity without superciliousness, a smile full of thought; look sharp, hear a lot, speak little! Oh, compliments to be sure, as many as you like; and quotations too would be a good idea, but short and profound, — in philosophy, Hegel; in literature, Jean Paul; in politics —

Jeanne — But I don't talk politics.

Paul — All the women talk politics here.

Jeanne — I don't understand a bit of it.

Paul — No more do they. That's no matter: keep right on! Quote Pufendorf and Machiavelli as if they were relatives of yours, and the Council of Trent as if you had presided over it. As for relaxations, — music in your room, a stroll in the garden, and whist, are all I'll allow you. With that, high-necked dresses, and the few words of Latin I have put you up to, I expect them inside of a week to be saying about you, "Ah, ha! that little Mme. Raymond will be a Minister's wife." And in this society, mind you, when they say of a woman that she is just the wife for a Minister, her husband is pretty near being one.

[1] It will be understood that the perpetual contrast between the familiar or condescending *tu* and the customary *vous* cannot be fully rendered; that where it forms the entire point of a remark, it is given there and near by for intelligibility.

Jeanne — Why do you want to be a Minister?

Paul — Oh, merely so as not to attract notice.

Jeanne — But Mme. de Céran is on the Opposition side, so what office can you expect out of it?

Paul — Sweet innocence! In the matter of offices, my dear, there is only one shade of difference between the Government and the Opposition: the Government party demand them, and the Opposition party accept them. No, no! I tell you that it is just here that reputations, situations, and elections are made, unmade, and over-made, or under color of literature and fine arts the knifers get in their work; it is here that's the little door of ministries, the ante-room of academies, the laboratory of success.

Jeanne — Mercy on me! What is this society?

Paul — This society, my dear, is a Hotel de Rambouillet[1] in 1881: a society where they talk and they pose, where pedantry takes the place of learning, sentimentality of feeling, and preciosity of delicacy; where they never say what they think, and never think what they say; where personal attention is wire-pulling, friendship a calculation, and even gallantry a means; where one swallows his cane in the anteroom [for stiffness] and his tongue in the drawing-room: the serious world, in a nutshell!

Jeanne — But that is the society where they are bored.

Paul — Precisely.

Jeanne — But if they are bored there, what influence can it have?

Paul — "What influence!" — Oh, simplicity, simplicity! what influence has boredom with us? — Why, enormous! why, most eminent! The Frenchman, mind you, has a horror of boredom that reaches to actual veneration. To him, Boredom is a terrible god who has full-dress for his worship. He doesn't comprehend the serious except under that form. I don't say he practices it, to be sure, but he only believes in it the more firmly: he likes better to believe in it — than to go and see it. Yes, this gay people despises itself at bottom for being so; it has lost faith in the good sense of its old laughter: this skeptical and talkative people believes in the mutes, this expansive and genial people lets itself be imposed on by the pedantic owlishness and the pretentious emptiness of the pontiffs of the

[1] The famous circle of the Marquis de Rambouillet, early in the seventeenth century, which powerfully affected the literature and politics of France.

white cravat: in politics as in science, as in art, as in literature, as in everything! It sneers at them, it hates them, it flees them like a pestilence, but they alone have its secret admiration and its absolute confidence! What influence has boredom? Oh, my dear child! Why, it comes to this, that there are only two sorts of people in the world: those who won't be bored and who are nothing, and those who will be bored and who are everything — next to those who can bore other people!

Jeanne — And *that* is where you have brought me, you bad boy!

Paul — Do you want to be prefect? yes or no?

Jeanne — Oh! in the first place, I never could —

Paul — Pshaw! there's only a week of it to stand.

Jeanne — A week! without talking, without laughing, without kissing you.

Paul — Before folks; but when we are alone — and then in corners — come, behave! — just the contrary, it will be charming: I will give you appointments — in the garden — everywhere — as it was before we were married — at your father's, you know —?

Jeanne — Hm! all the same — all the same — [*opens the piano and plays an air from "La Fille de Madame Angot."*]

Paul [*in terror*] — Oh my! oh my! what are you doing there?

Jeanne — It's from that new operetta.

Paul — Rattle-head! that's how you profit —

Jeanne — Both of us in an opera-box — O Paul! it was so lovely.

Paul — Jeanne — but, Jeanne, if anybody should come — do you want — [François *appears at the farther end.*] Too late!

[Jeanne *changes the operetta air into a symphony from Beethoven.*

Paul [*aside*]: Beethoven — bravo! [*Follows the measure with a profound air.*] Ah! decidedly, there's no music but that of the Conservatory.

Scene III.

François — The Countess begs the Sub-Prefect to wait five minutes for her: she is in conference with the Baron Eriel de Saint-Réault.

Paul — The Orientalist?

François — I don't know, monsieur: it is the savant whose father had so much talent —

Paul [*aside*] — And who holds so many offices. That's good. [*Aloud.*] Ah! M. de Saint-Réault is in the château — and Madame de Saint-Réault, too, of course?

François — Yes, M. Sub-Prefect, and so are the Marquise de Loudan and Mme. Arriego; but those ladies are just this moment in Paris, at M. de Bellac's course, with Mlle. Suzanne de Villiers.

Paul — And there are no other ladies residing here?

François — There is the Duchess de Réville, Madame's aunt.

Paul — Oh, I wasn't speaking of the Duchess, nor Miss Watson, nor Mlle. de Villiers — they are members of the household — but of strangers like us.

François — No, M. Sub-Prefect, those are all.

Paul — And they are not expecting anybody?

François — Anybody? — Yes, M. Sub-Prefect: M. Roger, the son of the Countess, is to get home this very day from his scientific mission in the East; they are expecting him every moment — oh! and then M. Bellac, the professor, who is going to put up here for some time when his lecture course is through; at least they hope so.

Paul [*aside*] — So that's why there are so many ladies here. [*Aloud.*] Thank you, that's all.

François — Then M. Sub-Prefect will wait?

Paul — Yes, and tell the Countess not to incommode herself.

Scene IV.

Paul — Ah-h-h! How you terrified me with your music! But you got yourself out of it first-rate. Bravo! To change Lecocq into Beethoven — that was pretty strong!

Jeanne — I am so stupid, a'n't I?

Paul — Oh, how well I know you're not! Well, as we've got five minutes yet, one word about the people here: that is mere prudence.

Jeanne — Oh, no more now!

Paul — Come, Jeanne, five minutes! These lessons are indispensable.

Jeanne — Then after each lesson you must kiss me.

Paul — Well, all right — there, what a child! Oh, come, it won't take long! — the mother, the son, the friend, and the invited guests, — neither men nor women, all serious people.

Jeanne — Well, that's a cheerful prospect.

Paul — Reassure yourself! there are two of them that are not that — serious. I have kept them for you till the last.

Jeanne — Wait — pay me first! [*Counts on her fingers.*] Mme de Céran, one; her son Roger, two; Miss Lucy, three; two Saint-Réaults; one Bellac; one Loudan and one Arriégo — that makes eight. [*Holds up her face.*

Paul — Eight what?

Jeanne — Eight lessons, to be sure: come, pay up.

[*Holds up her face.*

Paul — What a child! — There! there! there!

[*Kisses her again and again.*

Jeanne — Oh, not so fast: retail! retail!

Paul [*after kissing her more slowly*] — There! are you satisfied?

Jeanne — I can wait. Tell me about the two that are not serious now.

Paul — First, the Duchess de Réville, the aunt in the succession: a handsome old lady who has been a handsome woman —

Jeanne [*with an interrogative air*] — Hm?

Paul — They say so. A little hare-brained, and strong on — speeches, but excellent, with good sense — you'll see. And last, for the bouquet [of the fireworks], Suzanne de Villiers. Oh, she is not serious a bit, indeed; not serious enough.

Jeanne — In a word —?

Paul — A raw girl of eighteen, an awkward, loose-tongued parcel, with audacities of behavior and language — oh, but — and whose history is a whole romance.

Jeanne —That's just the thing! Oh, goody! Go on!

Paul — She is the daughter of a certain widow —

Jeanne [*in the same tone as before, but louder*] — Mph?

Paul — Well, a widow! — and of the late De Georges de Villiers, another nephew of the Duchess, whom she adored. A natural daughter, therefore.

Jeanne — Natural? Oh, but this is delicious!

Paul — The mother is dead, the father is dead. The little girl was left alone at twelve, with a fast-man's heredity and an education to match. Georges taught her Javanese. The

Duchess, who is daft about her, brought her to Mme. de Céran's, who detests her, and had Roger given her for a tutor. They have tried sending her to a convent, but she escaped from it twice; they sent her back a third time, and here she is! Judge of the effect in this house! Fireworks by moonlight. Well, I'm through, I hope: that's nice, isn't it?

Jeanne — So nice that I'll forgive you the two kisses you owe me —

Paul [*disappointedly*] — Oh!

Jeanne — And I'll give them to you instead. [*Kisses him.*

Paul — You crazy creature! [*The door at the farther end opens.*] Oh! Saint-Réault and Mme. de Céran. Breathe in my eye! — No, they didn't see us. — Be careful, now! Hm! Be on your guard!

Scene V.

Mme. de Céran *and* Saint-Reault *are chatting in the doorway without seeing* Paul *and* Jeanne.

Mme. de Céran — No, my friend! not on the first ballot, you understand! 15–8–15 on the first ballot. — There is a first ballot, and consequently a second ballot: that's simple enough.

Saint-Réault — Simple! simple! On the second ballot, as I have only four votes on the second ballot, with your nine votes on the first ballot, that only makes thirteen on the second ballot.

Mme. de Céran — And our seven on the first ballot, that makes twenty on the second ballot: don't you see?

Saint-Réault [*seeing the point*] — Ha!

Paul [*to* Jeanne] — It's ever so simple.

Mme. de Céran — But — ! I repeat, be attentive to Dalibert and the Liberals. The Academy is Liberal at this moment. [*Insisting.*] At this moment. [*They come down front, talking.*

Saint-Réault — Isn't Revel also a director in the Junior School?

Mme. de Céran [*eying him sharply*] — Well? — Revel is not dead, that I know of.

Saint-Réault — Why, no.

Mme. de Céran [*as before*] — Nor sick, is he?

Saint-Réault [*rather embarrassed*] — Oh, sick — he's always that.

Mme. de Céran — Well, what then?

Saint-Réault — Why, we ought to be ready — who knows — ? I'm going to keep my eye out.

Mme. de Céran [*aside*] — There's something back of this. [*Noticing* RAYMOND, *and going to him.*] Ah, my dear M. Raymond, I was forgetting you: pardon me.

Paul — Ah, Countess! [*Presenting* JEANNE *to her.*] Mme. Paul Raymond.

Mme. de Céran — Welcome to my house, madame. You are with a friend here. [*Presenting them to* SAINT-REAULT *and him to them.*] M. Paul Raymond, sub-prefect of Agenis; Mme. Paul Raymond: Baron Eriel de Saint-Réault.

Paul — I am the more happy in being presented to you, Baron, as in my youth I had the honor of knowing your illustrious father. [*Aside.*] He plucked me on my baccalaureate.

Saint-Réault [*saluting*] — Very happy, M. Prefect, in this coincidence.

Paul — Less than I am, Baron; at any rate, less proud.

[SAINT-REAULT *goes to the table and writes.*

Mme. de Céran [*to* JEANNE] — You will find my house perhaps a little austere for your youth, madame: you must blame no one but your husband if your sojourn here involves some monotony, and console yourself by reflecting that to submit is to obey, and that in coming here you were not free.

Jeanne [*gravely*] — In what, Countess? To be free is not to do what we like, but what we think for the best — as the philosopher Joubert says.

Mme. de Céran [*looking approvingly at* PAUL] — That is a sentence which reassures me, my dear. Besides, however purely intellectual may be the movement in my salon, it is not without attraction for elevated spirits. And by the way, the soirée to-day will be particularly interesting. M. de Saint-Réault is to read us an extract from his unpublished work on Rama-Ravana and the Sanskrit legends.

Paul — Really! Oh, Jeanne!

Jeanne — How fortunate!

Mme. de Céran — After which, I think I can promise you something from M. Bellac.

Jeanne — The Professor!

Mme. de Céran — Do you know him?

Jeanne — What lady does not know him? Oh, that will be charming!

Mme. de Céran — A familiar talk, *ad usum mundi*, — a few

words only, but rare fruit; and lastly, to conclude, the reading of an unpublished piece.

Paul — Oh! in verse, perhaps?

Mme. de Céran — Yes, the first work of a young unknown poet whom they will present to me this evening, and whose work is to be accepted by the Théâtre Français.

Paul — These are pieces of good fortune which the refined encounter only with you, Countess.

Mme. de Céran [*to* JEANNE] — Does not all this literature frighten you a little, madame? For the truth is that a soirée like this is so much lost to your beauty.

Jeanne [*gravely*] — What the vulgar call time lost is very often time gained, as M. de Tocqueville says!

Mme. de Céran [*looking at her in astonishment, says in a low voice to* PAUL] — She is charming! [SAINT-REAULT *rises and goes toward the door.*] Why, Saint-Réault, are you going?

Saint-Réault [*as he goes*] — To the station: excuse me. A telegram — I shall be back in ten minutes.

Mme. de Céran — There is certainly something — [*Searches on the table. — To* JEANNE *and* PAUL.] Pardon! [*Rings;* FRANCOIS *appears.*] The newspapers?

François — M. de Saint-Réault took them this morning, your Ladyship. They are in his room.

Paul [*drawing the* Journal Amusant *from his pocket*] — If you would be pleased, Countess —

[JEANNE *stops him abruptly, draws the* Journal des Débats *from her own, and hands it to Mme. de Céran.*

Jeanne — It is to-day's.

Mme. de Céran — With pleasure — I am curious — pardon me again. [*Opens the paper and reads.*]

Paul [*low, to his wife*] — Bravo! Good enough! Keep on! That Joubert was exquisite! and the Tocqueville! Why, how —

Jeanne [*low*] — It isn't De Tocqueville, it's myself.

Paul — Oh!

Mme. de Céran [*reading*] — "Revel very sick." There now! I was sure! Saint-Réault doesn't lose any time. [*Passing the journal to* PAUL.] I have learned what I wished to know — thank you. I will not detain you: you will be shown your rooms. We dine at six precisely: the Duchess is very exact, you know. At four, consommé; at five, a walk; at six, dinner. [*Four o'clock strikes.*] And stay, there is four now.

Scene VI.

The Duchess *enters, followed by* François *who places her arm-chair and tapestry basket, and a* Chambermaid *who carries the consommé. She sits down in the easy-chair prepared for her.*

Mme. de Céran — My dear aunt, allow me to present to you —

Duchess [*installing herself*] — Wait a minute — wait a minute. There! Now — present who to me? [*Looks through her double eyeglass.*] It isn't Raymond, I don't suppose? I've known him this many a year.

Paul [*advancing with* Jeanne] — No, Duchess; but Mme. Paul Raymond, his wife, if you please.

Duchess [*eying over* Jeanne, *who salutes her*] — She is pretty! She is very pretty! With my little Suzanne, and Lucy in spite of her glasses, there'll be three pretty women in this house. Gracious, that will be none too many. [*Drinks soup. — To* Jeanne.] And how did such a charming girl as you come to marry that dreadful republican?

Paul [*exclaiming*] — Oh, Duchess? I a republican!

Duchess — Well, you have been one, anyhow.

Paul — Oh, well, like everybody else, when I was little. It's the political measles, Duchess: everybody has to have it.

Duchess [*laughing*] — Ha, ha! the measles! That's funny. [*To* Jeanne.] And you, are you a little gay too, my dear child, eh?

Jeanne [*with reserve*] — Mercy, your Grace, I am no enemy to proper enjoyment — and I —

Duchess — Yes indeed, there's a difference between a lark and you, I see that. So much the worse! so much the worse! I like to have folks gay, for my part — especially at your age. [*To the* Chambermaid.] Here, take this away. [*Pointing to her cup.*]

Mme. de Céran [*to the* Chambermaid] — Will you conduct Mme. Raymond to her room, mademoiselle? [*To* Jeanne.] Your apartment is beside mine.

Jeanne — Thank you, madame. [*To* Paul.] Come, dear, this way.

Mme. de Céran — No, your husband I have put over there on the other side, with us workers; between the count, my son, and M. Bellac, in the pavilion that we call here — a little pretentiously, perhaps — the Pavilion of the Muses. [*To* Paul.]

François will show you the way: I thought you would be better situated for work there.

Paul — Admirably, Countess, and I thank you. [JEANNE *pinches him.*] Aigh!

Jeanne [*softly*] — Go on, dear!

Paul [*low*] — At least you will come and help me unpack my trunks.

Jeanne — How?

Paul — By the corridors, above.

Duchess [*to* MME. DE CÉRAN] — If you imagine you are giving them any pleasure by your "separation of bodies" —

Jeanne [*low, to* PAUL] — I am too good-natured.

Mme. de Céran [*to* JEANNE] — Why, does this arrangement annoy you?

Jeanne — I, your Ladyship? Not the least in the world. Moreover, you know better than any one else *quid deceat, quid non.*

Mme. de Céran [*to* PAUL] — Altogether charming!

[*They go out,* PAUL *to the right,* JEANNE *to the left.*

SCENE VII.

Duchess [*seated near the table on the left and working at her tapestry*] — Huh! she speaks Latin! Well, well! she won't disfigure the collection.

Mme. de Céran — You know, aunt, that Revel is at the point of death.

Duchess — He doesn't do anything but that; and besides, what has that to do with me?

Mme. de Céran [*seating herself*] — Why, aunt! Revel is a second Saint-Réault. He holds at least fifteen offices: that of director in the Junior School among others, a situation that leads to everything; that's what Roger must have. He has just come back to-day, and I have the secretary of the Ministry to dinner this evening, you know.

Duchess — Yes, a new stratum called Toulonnier.

Mme. de Céran — This evening I carry off the place.

Duchess — Then you are going to make a schoolmaster of your son, at present?

Mme. de Céran — But it's the first round of the ladder, aunt, don't you understand!

Duchess — To be sure, you've brought him up like a tutor.

Mme. de Céran — I have made a serious man of him, aunt.

Duchess — Oh yes, talk of that! A man of twenty-eight, who has not yet even — got into one scrape, I'll bet on it: if that isn't shameful!

Mme. de Céran — At thirty he will be in the Institute; at thirty-five in the Chamber.

Duchess — Well, well! actually, you are going to begin over again with the son what you did with the father?

Mme. de Céran — Did I do so badly by him, then?

Duchess — Oh, as for your husband, I've nothing to say: a dried-up heart, a mediocre intelligence —

Mme. de Céran — Aunt!

Duchess — Let me alone, will you: your husband was a fool!

Mme. de Céran — Duchess!

Duchess — A fool with Deportment! You shoved him into politics. He was a marked-out man. And yet all you could make of him was a minister of agriculture and commerce. That wasn't much to brag of! Well, let it pass for him: but for Roger, it's another thing, — he is intelligent, he must have a heart or else he'll have got — oh, good gracious! or else he won't be my nephew. You don't think of that, do you?

Mme. de Céran — I think of his career, aunt.

Duchess — And of his happiness?

Mme. de Céran — I have thought of that.

Duchess — Oh yes, indeed! Lucy, isn't it? They write to each other, I know: she's pretty — but pshaw! A girl with glasses and without any bust — do you call that thinking of his happiness?

Mme. de Céran — Duchess, you are dreadful.

Duchess — A sort of aerolite who fell here for a fortnight and has been here ten years, a pedant who corresponds with the great scholars and translates Schopenhauer.

Mme. de Céran — A serious, educated person, an orphan, extremely rich and well born, the niece of the Lord Chancellor, who recommended her to me — that will be a wife for Roger —

Duchess — That English bankeress! — brrr! Just by kissing her he'll get his nose frozen. Besides, you're on the wrong track, you know. In the first place, Bellac is in love with her: yes, the professor. Oh, he has wanted too many lessons of me. — And then, she is in love with him.

Mme. de Céran — Lucy?

Duchess — Yes, Lucy! exactly! Just like all the rest of you, too: you're all crazy over him! — Oh, I know that

business better than you do, maybe. — No, no, it isn't Lucy that is to be your son's.

Mme. de Céran — Yes, it is Suzanne : I know your designs.

Duchess — And I don't hide them ! Yes, if I brought Suzanne to your house, it was so he'd marry her ; if I wanted him to be her tutor, and after a fashion her master, it was so he'd marry her : and he will marry her, I count on it.

Mme. de Céran — You count without me, Duchess, for I will never consent to it !

Duchess — And why not? A child —

Mme. de Céran — Disquieting in origin, disquieting in behavior, without education, without breeding !

Duchess [*bursting into a laugh*] — Just me, at her age !

Mme. de Céran — Without fortune, without birth !

Duchess — Without birth ! The daughter of my poor Georges, so beautiful, so kind, so brave — your cousin, after all.

Mme. de Céran — A natural child !

Duchess — Natural ! Well, what of it? Natural ! As if all children weren't natural ! — You make me laugh ! And then, besides, he acknowledged her. And then — and then — you'll come out nowhere, you know, if the devil mixes in it — and so I have to !

Mme. de Céran — He has mixed himself in it, Duchess, but not as you hope : it is you who are on the wrong track.

Duchess — Oh, the professor ! yes, yes, Bellac. You told me that. Then you think nobody can go to his lectures without falling in love with him?

Mme. de Céran — But Suzanne has never missed one, aunt, and she takes notes, and she writes them out, and she *works :* Suzanne doing serious work ! And when he is there, she never leaves him for an instant — she drinks in his words. And all that for instruction, forsooth? Oh, pshaw ! it isn't the instruction she loves, it's the instructor ! that's just as clear ! Besides, one has only to see her with Lucy : she's jealous of her. And that coquetry that has come to her, and her character for some time since? She sings, she sulks, she blushes, she turns pale, she laughs, she cries —

Duchess — April showers : it's the flower beginning to blow. She is bored, is that child.

Mme. de Céran — Here?

Duchess — Here ! Oh my, do you imagine people get any fun here? I myself, mind you, I ! do you suppose if I were

eighteen I'd be here, with all your old women and all your old men? Oh, yes, perhaps! — Why, I'd be always squeezed in with the young people, I would! and the youngest possible, and the handsomest possible! We women, mind — there's only one thing that never bores us, and that is to love and be loved! And the older I grow, the more I see there's no other happiness in the world.

Mme. de Céran — There are more serious things, aunt.

Duchess — More serious than love? Oh, come! In other words, when you lose hold of that, you make out with others; when we get old we have false enjoyments as we have false teeth, but there's only one true sort! just one! it's love, I tell you!

Mme. de Céran — You are romantic, aunt.

Duchess — That's on account of my age, niece. Women are that twice: at sixteen for themselves, at sixty for others. — To sum up, you want Lucy to marry your son; I want it should be Suzanne: you say it is Suzanne that loves Bellac, I tell you it is Lucy. Perhaps both of us are wrong. It's Roger that must judge.

Mme. de Céran — What?

Duchess — Yes: I shall set forth the whole situation to him not later than immediately after he gets here.

Mme. de Céran — You will?

Duchess — Oh, he's her tutor! He's got to know about it. [*Aside.*] And besides, it will stir him up a little, and he needs it!

Scene VIII.

Enter Lucy, *in full low-necked toilette and a tippet.*

Lucy — I think your son is here, madame.

Mme. de Céran — The Count!

Duchess — Roger!

Lucy — His carriage is entering the court.

Mme. de Céran — At last!

Duchess — Were you afraid he wouldn't come back?

Mme. de Céran — That he wouldn't come back in time, yes — on account of that position.

Lucy — Oh! He wrote me this morning that he would arrive to-day, Thursday.

Duchess — And you cut the Professor's lecture to see him sooner? Well, that's good.

Lucy — Oh, it isn't for that, madame.

Duchess [*low, to* MME. DE CÉRAN] — You see? [*Aloud.*] No?

Lucy — No — I was hunting — I — it was something else that kept me away.

Duchess — But it isn't for the aforesaid Schopenhauer that you've got up that toilette, I imagine?

Lucy — But aren't we to receive here this evening, madame?

Duchess [*low to* MME. DE CÉRAN] — Bellac, it's clear enough. [*To* LUCY.] My compliments, moreover. There's only those frightful glasses — why do you wear such infamies?

Lucy — Because I can't see without them, madame.

Duchess — A nice reason! [*Aside.*] She is practical. I have a horror of that! All the same, she isn't as thin as I imagined. These English are agreeable surprises.

Mme. de Céran — Ah! here's my son.

SCENE IX.

Enter ROGER.

Roger — Mother! oh, mother! how happy I am to see you again.

Mme. de Céran — And I the same, my dear child. [*Gives him her hand to kiss.*]

Roger — How long it has been! Once more! [*Kisses her hand again.*]

Duchess [*aside*] — They don't choke each other.

Mme. de Céran [*calling his attention to* MME. DE RÉVILLE] — The Duchess, my friend.

Roger [*going to the* DUCHESS] — Duchess!

Duchess — Call me aunt, and kiss me!

Roger — My dear aunt — [*Starts to kiss her hand.*]

Duchess — No! no! On the cheeks for me, on the cheeks: those are the little perquisites of my age. Now look straight at me! You've still got your little tutorial air! Well, you've let your mustaches grow: he's every bit a darling like that, the boy is.

Mme. de Céran — I hope, Roger, you will cut those off.

Roger — Yes, mother, don't worry. Ah, Lucy; good morning, Lucy!

Lucy — Good morning, Roger! [*They shake hands.*] Did you have a pleasant journey?

Roger — Oh ! the most interesting kind : fancy a country almost unexplored, and as I wrote you, a veritable mine for the scientist, the poet, and the artist.

Duchess — And the women ? Tell me a little about the women.

Mme. de Céran — Duchess !

Roger [*in astonishment*] — What women, aunt ?

Duchess — The women of the East, who are so beautiful, it seems — ah, you rascal !

Roger — I assure you, aunt, I lacked the time to verify that — detail.

Duchess [*indignantly*] — Detail !

Roger [*smiling*] — Besides, the government did not send me out for that.

Duchess — Well, what did you see, then ?

Roger — You will read it all in the *Revue Archéologique.*

Lucy — On the funeral monuments of western Asia, isn't it, Roger ?

Roger — Yes. Oh, Lucy ! there are *tumuli* there —

Duchess — Come, come, you can be sentimental when you are by yourselves. Talk to me a little : you must be tired. Have you just arrived ?

Roger — Oh, no, aunt ! I have been in Paris since last evening.

Duchess — Did you go to the theater ?

Roger — No, I simply went to see the Minister.

Mme. de Céran — That's right ! and what did he say to you ?

Lucy — I will leave you.

Mme. de Céran — Oh, you can stay, Lucy.

Lucy — No, it is better manners to leave you : I will be back shortly ; — good-bye, Roger. [*Gives him her hand.*]

Roger [*pressing her hand*] — Good-bye, Lucy.

Duchess [*aside*] — As for those two, I'll warrant them calm — one couldn't be calmer.

[LUCY *goes out*, ROGER *accompanies her as far as door on right*, MME. DE CÉRAN *seats herself in easy-chair beside table.*

SCENE X.

Mme. de Céran — Well, what did the Minister say to you ?

Duchess — Ah, yes, that's right, let's talk a little about what's happened this long while.

Roger — He questioned me on the results of my voyage, and

requested my report with the briefest delay, assigning for the day of its deposit a recompense which you divine, do you not? [*Shows his button-hole, in which is the ribbon of the Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.*

Mme. de Céran — Officer? That is well, but I have better. And what next?

Roger — And next, he charged me to present his respects to you, mother, begging you to keep him in mind for that bill in the Senate.

Mme. de Céran — I will keep him in mind if he will keep us in mind. You must begin on your report without delay.

Roger — At once.

Mme. de Céran — You sent cards to the President's house?

Roger — Yes, this morning; and to those of General de Briais and Madame de Vielfond.

Mme. de Céran — Good! People must know of your return. And I will have a note sent to the papers too. On that point, one observation: The articles you have sent from abroad are very well; only I have discovered with surprise a tendency to — what shall I say? — to imagination, to style; there are descriptions of nature — digressions — there are even *verses* — [*in a tone of sorrowful reproach*] verses of Alfred de Musset, my child!

Duchess — Yes indeed, it was almost amusing, on my word.

Mme. de Céran — The Duchess is jesting, my dear; but guard yourself against poetry, I beg. You are treating of serious matters: *be* serious.

Roger — I didn't suppose, mother — but how does one recognize that an article is serious?

Duchess [*showing a pamphlet*] — By its not being cut, my dear.

Mme. de Céran — Your aunt exaggerates, my child; but come, believe me, no poetry. And now, we dine at six. You have your report on the *tumuli* to do, and an hour before you. I will not detain you: off to your work, go!

Duchess — One instant! Now that your outpourings of the heart are through with, let's talk business, if you please. And Suzanne?

Roger — Oh, that dear little girl, where is she?

Duchess — At the course of comparative literatures, my dear.

Roger — Suzanne?

Duchess — Yes, at Bellac's course.

Roger — Bellac? — Mm. — Bellac?

Duchess — A this-winter's mushroom, the fashionable savant, one of those Normal School dandy abbés, who court women and are courted by them, and push themselves by that means. The Princess Okolitch, who is mad about him, — like all us old women, for that matter, — struck the notion of having him give twice a week, in her drawing-room, a course of which literature is the pretext and tittle-tattle the object. Now, by dint of seeing all the upper-ten petticoats smitten with the genius of this young, amiable, fertile Vadius, it seems your pupil has done like the others, that's all !

Mme. de Céran — This is useless, Duchess —

Duchess — Pardon me, he is her tutor, and he ought to know everything.

Roger — But what does all this mean, aunt?

Duchess — It means that Suzanne is in love with this gentleman ! There ! do you understand?

Roger — Suzanne ! — oh, pshaw : that half-grown girl !

Duchess — Oh, it doesn't take long for a half-grown girl to turn into a full-grown woman, you must know.

Roger — Suzanne !

Duchess — Well, anyway, that's what your mother maintains.

Mme. de Céran — I maintain — I maintain that that — young lady is obviously seeking for the good graces of a man much too serious to marry her, but enough of a lady's man to amuse himself with her ; and I maintain that in my house, this affair, which as yet is nothing more than an impropriety, shall not grow into a scandal.

Duchess [*to* ROGER] — You understand?

Roger — But, mother, you astound me ! Suzanne ! a child that I left in short dresses, climbing trees ; a little girl I set tasks for, who jumped into my lap, who called me "papa" — pshaw, it's impossible ! — such precocious depravity —

Duchess — Depravity, because she's in love ! Oh, you are your mother's son with a vengeance ! — And as to being precocious, at her age it was many a day since my heart had spoken. He was a hussar, was mine ! Yes, blue and gold ! superb ! He was as stupid as his sword ! but at that age — ! A new heart is like a new house — the ones that dry the plastering are not the true tenants ! — Well, it seems that Bellac — oh, it doesn't seem likely, but girls — must be watched. [*Aside.*] I don't believe a word of it, but it will stir him up. [*Aloud.*] And that's why you will please me by burying those *tumuli* of yours, and occupying yourself with her and nothing but her.

Scene XI.

Suzanne [*entering stealthily behind and putting her hand over his eyes*] — Peekaboo !

Roger [*rising*] — Eh ?

Suzanne [*coming around and standing before him*] — Ah ! there she is.

Roger [*in surprise*] — But, mademoiselle —

Suzanne — Wretch ! not to recognize your daughter.

Roger — Suzanne !

Duchess [*aside*] — He's blushing.

Suzanne — Well ! aren't you going to kiss me ?

Mme. de Céran — Come, Suzanne, this is not becoming —

Suzanne — To kiss my father ? — Well ! [*Goes to him.*]

Duchess [*to* Roger] — Oh, kiss her, why don't you ! [*They kiss.*]

Suzanne — I'm so glad ! — Just imagine, I didn't know you were coming to-day ! It was Mme. de Saint-Réault that told me at the lecture, just now ; then without saying a word — I was right close to a door — I skipped out and ran for the railroad station !

Mme. de Céran — Alone ?

Suzanne — Yes, all alone ! Oh, it was so amusing ! — But the funniest thing, you'll see ! I got to the ticket window — no money, oh dear ! When he noticed it, a gentleman that was getting his ticket offered to get mine — a very polite young man. He was just going to Saint-Germain. And then another, a most respectable old gentleman ! And then a third, and then everybody, all the gentlemen that were there — they were all going to Saint-Germain. "But, mademoiselle, I beg you ! " — "I could not suffer — " "Me, mademoiselle, me ! " I gave the preference to the respectable old gentleman : you understand, it was more discreet.

Mme. de Céran — You accepted it ?

Suzanne — Why, I couldn't stay there, you know.

Mme. de Céran — From a stranger ?

Suzanne — What, when he was a respectable old gentleman ? Oh, he was ever so nice : he helped me get into the car — oh, ever so nice ! they all were, for that matter ; for they all got in with us. And so kind ! They offered me the corners, they raised the windows, and then they were so pressing — "Here, mademoiselle ! " "No, you will be riding backwards ! "

"Excuse me, sit there: not in the sun, mademoiselle!" — and they made bows, just as they would to a lady. — Oh yes, it's amusing to travel alone! — It was only the respectable old gentleman, who kept talking to me about his immense property — I didn't like that a bit.

Mme. de Céran — Why, this is monstrous!

Suzanne — Oh no; but the most surprising thing is that when we got here, I found my pocket-book again! in my pocket! Then I paid back the respectable old gentleman, I made a handsome curtsy to the other gentlemen, and came out. Oh dear, they all looked at me so — [*To* ROGER] — like you, just! — What ails him? — Come then, kiss me again!

Mme. de Céran [*to the* DUCHESS] — This is an indecorum that surpasses all the others.

Suzanne — An indecorum!

Duchess — You see well enough she has no consciousness —

Mme. de Céran — A young girl alone on the railroad!

Suzanne — Lucy goes out all alone.

Mme. de Céran — Lucy is not eighteen.

Suzanne — I should think not! She's twenty-four if she's a day!

Mme. de Céran — Lucy knows how to conduct herself.

Suzanne — Why? because she wears glasses?

Duchess [*laughing*] — Good, Suzanne! [*Aside.*] I do adore that child!

Mme. de Céran — Lucy wasn't sent home from the convent.

Suzanne — Oh, that — that was an injustice, you'll see in a minute. When I got too sick of —

Mme. de Céran — It is needless: your tutor knows it all.

Suzanne — Yes, but he doesn't know why. You'll see if it wasn't an injustice. When I got too sick of the class, I got myself sent outdoors — to take a walk in the garden, you know. Oh my! it was just as easy — I knew how. In the midst of a total silence, I'd exclaim, "Ah, what a genius Voltaire was!" Sister Seraphine would say to me right away, "Leave the room, miss!" It didn't take long, and it always worked. One day when the sun was just lovely, I looked out of the window, and all at once I said, "Ah, what a genius Voltaire was!" and I waited. Not a word! I said again, "Oh, Voltaire was such —" Still nothing — dead silence! I was so astonished that I turned round. The mother superior was there; I hadn't heard her come in. Tableau! She didn't send me into the garden; not

much! She sent me back here! Ah, well, worse luck! — I've had enough convent like that — now I'm a woman! So there!

Mme. de Céran — Your conduct scarcely proves it. Mme. de Saint-Réault must be dying of uneasiness.

Suzanne — Oh, the lecture was nearly done; she'll be here in a minute with the others and M. Bellac. Oh, didn't he speak to-day! Oh!

Duchess [*looking at* ROGER] — Hm!

Suzanne — And how the ladies did applaud him! And in such toilettes! It looked like a marriage at Saint-Clotilde. Oh, but he was [*sounding a kiss on her fingers*] superb!

Duchess [*looking at* ROGER] — Hm!

Suzanne — Superb! And you ought to have heard the ladies — "Ah, charming! charming!" Mme. de Loudan set up little guinea-pig squeals over it. Aigh! aigh! aigh! I don't like that woman at all!

Duchess [*looking at* ROGER] — Hm! [*To* SUZANNE.] Then those are the notes you take of the lectures, are they?

Suzanne — Oh, I take others. [*To* ROGER.] You'll see.

Duchess [*to* ROGER, *taking the packet of notes which* SUZANNE *has laid on the table on entering*] — We can see immediately. [*Five o'clock strikes.*] Five o'clock! Oh! oh! and my walk! [*Low, to* ROGER.] Well, do you see anything there — for Bellac?

Roger — No, I —

Duchess — Search! Examine! Decipher! She's a palimpsest well worth any other. After all, it's your profession.

Roger — I don't understand it at all.

Duchess — And it's your duty!

Mme. de Céran [*aside*] — What an amount of lost time!

Duchess [*aside, looking at* ROGER] — It's stirring him up!

Suzanne [*aside, looking at all of them*] — What's the matter with them?

[DUCHESS *and* MME. DE CÉRAN *go out.*

SCENE XII.

Suzanne — How you look at me! Because I came alone? Are you angry?

Roger — No, Suzanne: but still you ought to comprehend —

Suzanne — But you don't call me *thou:* isn't that because you are angry?

Roger — No, but still —

Suzanne — Then it's because you find I'm a woman now — huh? — yes, isn't it? Tell me, oh, do tell me! — it would please me so much.

Roger — Yes, Suzanne, you are a woman now; and that is exactly why you must observe things more closely.

Suzanne [*squeezing against him*] — That's it, scold me: I like to have you.

Roger [*gently repulsing her*] — There, stay *so!*

Suzanne — Now just wait, you don't call me *thou:* don't you want me to call *you* so either?

Roger — It would be better not to.

Suzanne — Oh, how amusing! but it isn't easy.

Roger — There are many other proprieties to which you must bind yourself down henceforth, and that is precisely where the reproach —

Suzanne — Yes, yes! oh, I know: no deportment! M. Bellac has told me enough about that.

Roger — Ah! M. —

Suzanne — But what is it you want! no means — it isn't my fault, so there; I tell you truly, truly. You see, it isn't easy; but I did honestly make a resolution that on thy — on your return, thou — you — oh dear! I can't do it! worse luck — that will have to go for another time: — yes, I made a resolution that on thy return thou shouldst find me as stiff as Lucy, and that how I had studied! There's six months I study hard — and then, all at once I find you've got here, and, rattlety-bang! six months lost, and my stage début is a fizzle after all!

Roger [*reproachfully*] — "My stage début is a fizzle!"

Suzanne — Ah yes, I'm glad you've got back! — I love you so much! Oh, so much! I adore you!

Roger — Suzanne! Suzanne! Drop this habit of yours of using words you do not realize the full import of.

Suzanne — What! I don't realize — ! But I realize perfectly well! I adore you, I say. Don't you love me? such a funny expression as you have! Why do you have such a funny expression? Don't you love me better than Lucy?

Roger — Suzanne!

Suzanne — That's just it! You're going to marry her, aren't you?

Roger — Suzanne —

Suzanne — They told me so.

Roger — Come, come ! —

Suzanne — Then why did you write to her? — Yes, you wrote her twenty-seven letters — to her ! Oh, I've kept count of them — twenty-seven.

Roger — They were about matters —

Suzanne — And another this morning — still about matters, I suppose ? What did you write to her this morning, say.

Roger — Why, merely that I was to arrive Thursday.

Suzanne — That you were to arrive Thursday ? only that ? very likely ! Then why didn't you write to me ? I would have seen you first.

Roger — But haven't I written to you during my absence ? and often.

Suzanne — Oh, often ! — ten times ! and even those, little sentences about nothing at all, at the bottom of a page, as you would to a baby. I am not a baby any more, there ! I have thought a great deal in these six months ; I have learned things !

Roger — What ? what things ? [SUZANNE *leans on his shoulder and cries.*] Suzanne, what's the matter with you ?

Suzanne [*wiping her eyes and trying to laugh*] — Oh, and I have worked so ! oh, a lot ! You know, my piano — that horrible piano. — Well, I play Schumann, now : that's pretty stiff, isn't it ?

Roger — Oh ! —

Suzanne — Don't you want I should play it ?

Roger — No — later.

Suzanne — You are good and right ! And I have grown very learned, too.

Roger — Yes, you follow M. Bellac's courses : it is Bellac that has replaced me, then ?

Suzanne — Yes. Oh, he has been so kind ! Oh, I love him a lot, too.

Roger — Huh !

Suzanne [*eagerly*] — Are you jealous of him ?

Roger — I —

Suzanne — Oh, tell me so — I understand that ! I am so jealous myself ! — *oh !* — but why should you be ? You and anybody else isn't the same thing. You are not my father, are you ?

Roger — Excuse me : your father —

Suzanne — Then what are you ? Come, pet me a little, as you used to.

Roger — Not as I used to.

Suzanne — Yes! yes! as you used to. [*Goes to kiss him.*]

Roger — Suzanne! oh no, not that any more.

Suzanne — Why?

Roger — Come, keep off. Tck! tck! tck! [*Seats himself on the sofa.*]

Suzanne — I love to have you go "Tck! tck! tck!"

Roger [*as before*] — Be reasonable.

Suzanne — Oh, there's been reason enough for to-day!

[*Rumples his hair, laughing.*

Roger — Keep away with you! — A big girl!

Suzanne [*jealously*] — Oh! if it was Lucy —

Roger — There, behave thyself!

Suzanne — You called me *thou!* a forfeit! [*Sits down in his lap and kisses him.*]

Roger — Suzanne, once more —

Suzanne — Yes, once more. [*Kisses him.*]

Roger [*repulsing her and rising*] — This is unbearable!

Suzanne — I am a plague, ain't I? Pshaw! I'm going to look over my bunch of notes, that will make us friends again. [*Stops at the door and looks.*] Ah, there are the ladies and M. Bellac! What — Lucy is in low neck! Wait a minute. [*Hurries out.*]

Roger [*alone, much agitated*] — Unbearable!

Scene XIII.

Enter Duchess.

Duchess — Well?

Roger — Well?

Duchess — How agitated you are!

Roger — Well! — She has been very affectionate — perhaps too much so!

Duchess — I promise to commiserate you. Then you haven't found anything? But I've found this. [*Draws a card portrait from* Suzanne's *package of notes.*]

Roger — The photograph —?

Duchess — Of the professor — yes.

Roger — Among her notes!

Duchess [*airily*] — Yes, but that —

Roger — Ah! pardon me, that —

The Ladies *outside* — An admirable lecture! Magnificent!

Duchess — There he is, the beautiful object! with his body-guards!

Scene XIV.

Enter Bellac, Mme. Arriégo, Mme. de Loudan, Mmh. de Saint-Réault, Mme. de Céran, Lucy.

Mme. de Saint-Réault — Superb — it was superb!

Bellac — Mme. de Saint-Réault, spare me!

Mme. de Loudan — Ideal! do you hear? ideal!

Bellac — Marquise!

Mme. Arriégo — Beautiful! beautiful! Oh! I feel impassioned!

Bellac — Mme. Arriégo! there!

Mme. de Loudan — In short, ladies, say the word: it was — dangerous! but isn't that his besetting habit?

Bellac — Oh, pray, Mme. de Loudan.

Mme. de Loudan — Oh! to begin with, I am mad over your talent — yes, yes, mad! and so are all of you! Oh, I don't hide it! I tell it everywhere! cynically! — You are one of the gods of my Olympus! — it is fetishism!

Mme. Arriégo — You know I have one of his autographs in my locket. [*Points to her neck.*] There.

Mme. de Loudan [*pointing to her bosom*] — And I one of his pens, there!

Duchess [*to* Roger] — Old cats!

Mme. de Loudan [*to* Mme. de Céran] — Ah, Countess, why were you not at this lecture?

Mme. de Céran [*presenting* Roger] — Here is my excuse! My son, ladies.

Ladies — Ah, Count!

Mme. de Loudan — So that is the returned exile!

Roger [*bowing*] — Ladies!

Mme. de Céran [*presenting* Bellac *to her son*] — M. Bellac, — Count Roger de Céran.

Mme. de Loudan — I knew the obstacle was insurmountable — but you, Lucy, you —

Lucy — I? I had business here.

Mme. de Loudan — You absent, his Muse failed him.

Bellac [*gallantly*] — Ah, Marquise, I could answer you: you are another of them.

Mme. de Loudan — He is charming. [*To* LUCY.] Ah, you don't know what you lost.

Lucy — Oh, I know —

Mme. Arriégo — No, she does not know ! A flame ! A passion !

Mme. de Loudan — A sweetness of language ! A delicacy of thought !

Bellac — Before such an auditory, who would not be eloquent ?

Duchess — And what did he talk about to-day ?

All — Love !

Duchess [*to* ROGER] — Of course !

Mme. Arriégo — And like a poet !

Mme. de Loudan — And like a savant ! a psychologist coupled with a dreamer ! a lyre and a scalpel ! — It was — ah ! there was only one thing I cannot accept, and that is that love has its source in instinct.

Bellac — But, Marquise, I said —

Mme. de Loudan — Ah ! not that — no, no !

Bellac — I spoke of love in nature.

Mme. de Loudan — Instinct — pah ! Ladies, help me, defend me ! Lucy !

Bellac — You choose ill, Marquise, — Miss Watson holds by instinct.

Mme. de Saint-Réault — Is it possible, Lucy !

Mme. de Loudan — Instinct !

Mme. Arriégo — In love !

Mme. de Loudan — But that is to rob the soul of its most beautiful blossom : why, then there is no longer either good or evil, Lucy —

Lucy [*coldly*] — The problem here is neither of good nor evil, madame, but of the very existence of the species.

Ladies [*protesting*] — Oh-h-h !

Duchess [*aside*] — Decidedly she is practical !

Mme. de Loudan [*with indignation*] — Stop, you dehaloize Love !

Lucy — Hunter and Darwin —

Mme. de Loudan — No ! no ! no one knows better than I the fatalities of the body ! Matter dominates us, oppresses us, I know it ! I feel it ! but leave us at least the psychical refuge of pure ecstasies !

Bellac — But, Marquise —

Mme. de Loudan — Be silent ! you are a groveler ! I will not strike my God — that would be a sacrilege, — but I refuse to follow suit.

Duchess [*aside*] — Little old flyaway !

Bellac — We shall be reconciled, I hope, when you read my book.

Mme. de Loudan — But when ? oh, when ? Ah, that book, the whole world is waiting for it ! and he won't tell us anything about it, not even the title !

All — The title, at least the title !

Mme. Arriégo — Lucy ! you ! you insist on it !

Lucy — Well — the title ?

Bellac [*to* LUCY, *after a time*] — " Mélanges ! "

Mme. de Loudan — Oh, how nice that is ! — but when ? oh, when ?

Bellac — I am hastening the publication, feeling assured that it will give me one more claim to the position I solicit.

Mme. de Céran — You solicit ?

Mme. Arriégo — What more can he desire ?

Mme. de Loudan — He, the nursling of the fairies !

Bellac — Well, poor Revel is at the point of death, you know. And in any case, I confess without shame, I have put in my candidacy for the headship of the Junior School.

Duchess [*to* MME. CÉRAN] — No. 3.

Bellac — Ladies, if it so happen that it does not please God, I commend myself to your omnipotence.

Ladies — Be calm, Bellac.

Bellac [*turning toward the* DUCHESS] — And you, Duchess, may I hope —

Duchess — Oh ! I? My dear sir, you mustn't ask anything of me before dinner : the fatality of the body dominates me, as Mme. de Loudan says. [*A clock strikes.*] There, that's the first stroke, — you haven't over a quarter of an hour. Go and dress : we'll talk about this at the table.

Mme. de Céran — At the table ! but M. Toulonnier has not arrived, Duchess !

Duchess — Oh, goodness, it's all the same to me : at six precisely, with or without him —

Mme. de Céran — Without him ! a Secretary-General !

Duchess — Huh ! under the Republic !

[SUZANNE *enters with her note packet under her arm, and puts it on the table at the right.*

Mme. de Céran — I am going to meet him. [*To* BELLAC.] My dear professor, you will be shown to your room. [*Rings;* FRANÇOIS *enters.*]

Bellac — It is unnecessary, Countess, I have the happiness to know the way. [*Low, to* LUCY.] You received my letter?

Lucy — Yes, but — [BELLAC *makes her a sign to be silent, bows, and goes to the door of the apartment on the right.*]

Mme. de Loudan — And us, ladies, let us beautify ourselves for God!

Mme. Arriégo — Come!

Mme. de Céran — Will you come with me, Lucy?

Lucy — With pleasure, madame.

Mme. de Loudan — In that toilette? Aren't you afraid of the treacherous beauty of spring evenings, my dear?

Lucy — Oh, I'm not cold.

Mme. de Loudan — You are a daughter of the fogs, that is true. As for me, I am in terror of these blue dampnesses.

[*Goes out with* MME. ARRIÉGO *by the door of the apartment on the left.*]

[*At the moment* LUCY *starts to follow* MME. DE CÉRAN *into the garden she is held back by* FRANÇOIS.

François [*to* LUCY] — I haven't found that pink paper yet, miss.

Suzanne [*picking up a pink paper which she has just let fall on the table while moving the papers that litter it, to put her notes there: aside*] — A pink paper! [*Stands looking at it.*]

Lucy — Oh yes, that letter of this morning.

Suzanne [*aside, hiding it quickly behind her*] — That letter of this morning!

Lucy [*going*] — Oh well, don't hunt any more, there's no use. [*Goes out through the garden door.* FRANÇOIS *goes out behind her.*]

SCENE XV.

Suzanne [*aside, looking at* LUCY *and then at* ROGER] — That letter of this morning!

Duchess — What, you are not ready yet — nor you? But what have you just been doing here? [SUZANNE *looks at* ROGER *without answering.*]

Roger [*to the* DUCHESS] — Ah, those are the notes. Give them to me, Suzanne. [*Goes to her;* SUZANNE *holds out*

the package to him, still eying him without speaking.] What's the matter with her?

Duchess — Let me see those notes a minute!

[*Roger goes over to the* DUCHESS *seated on the left.* SUZANNE, *on the right near the table, tries to open the paper she holds in her left hand without being seen.*

Roger [*looking at* SUZANNE; *aside, in surprise*] — This is singular.

Duchess [*to* ROGER, *drawing him toward her*] — Here, come nearer! Oh dear me, my eyes!

Roger [*lets the notes droop while furtively regarding* SUZANNE, *and all at once grasps the* DUCHESS' *arm — low*] — Aunt!

Duchess [*low, to* ROGER] — What's the matter with you?

Roger — Look! Don't raise your head. She's trying to read something! A letter! Do you see? She's hiding it: do you see?

Duchess — Yes!

Suzanne [*who has opened the paper, reads*] — "I shall arrive Thursday." [*In astonishment.*] From Roger! His letter of this morning to LUCY! [*Looks at the paper.*] But why is it written like that, every which way and not signed? [*Reads.*] "This evening, at ten, in the conservatory. Have a sick headache." Oh!

Duchess — Why, what can it be? [*Calling.*] Suzanne!

Suzanne [*surprised, puts the hand that holds the letter behind her back, and turning toward the* DUCHESS, *says*] — Aunt?

Duchess — What are you reading there?

Suzanne — I, aunt? Nothing.

Duchess — Seems to me — Come here.

Suzanne [*slipping the letter under the books on the table she is leaning against, with the left hand she holds behind her back*] — Yes, aunt. [*Walks toward the* DUCHESS.]

Duchess [*aside*] — Huh! there's something queer in this, that's certain.

Suzanne [*near the* DUCHESS] — What do you want, aunt?

Duchess — Go and find me a cloak.

Suzanne [*hesitatingly*] — But —

Duchess — You don't want to?

Suzanne — Yes — yes, aunt.

Duchess — There in my chamber. Go on! [SUZANNE *goes.* DUCHESS, *to* ROGER.] On the table, quick!

Roger — What?

Duchess — The letter! She hid it! I saw her!

Roger — Hid it! [*Goes to the table and hunts.*

Duchess — Yes, in the corner there, under the black book! Don't you see anything?

Roger — No — Ah, yes! A pink paper! [*Takes the letter and carries it, reading, to the* DUCHESS.] Oh!

Duchess — What is it?

Roger [*reading*] — "I shall arrive Thursday." *From* Bellac!

Duchess [*snatching the letter from him and inspecting it*] — *From!* But it isn't signed! And such writing!

Roger — Topsy-turvy, yes. Oh, the gentleman is prudent! But "I shall arrive Thursday" is he or I!

Duchess [*reading*] — "This evening at ten, in the conservatory. Have a sick headache!" An appointment! [*Holding out the letter to him.*] Quick! quick! put it back! I understand it.

Roger [*with a troubled air*] — Yes — [*Puts the letter back where he took it from.*

Duchess — And now come back here!

Roger [*still troubled*] — Yes, yes!

Duchess — Quick, I say! quick! [ROGER *resumes his place beside his aunt.*] Quiet, now! there she is! [SUZANNE *reënters.* DUCHESS, *aloud, turning over the notes*] — Well, really, this is very good indeed, very good!

Suzanne — Here's your cloak, aunt.

Duchess — Thank you, dear. [*Low, to* ROGER.] You talk. [SUZANNE *goes to the table, takes up the letter again, and keeps casting her eyes on it while turning around as before, as* ROGER *talks.*]

Roger [*in a troubled way*] — There is really, here — ah — astonishing progress — and — ah — I am astonished — [*Low, to the* DUCHESS, *indicating* SUZANNE.] Aunt!

Duchess [*low*] — Yes, she picked it up again; I saw her. [*Clock strikes.* DUCHESS, *aloud.*] Second bell! Now go and dress, Suzanne, you'll never be ready!

Suzanne [*aside, eying* ROGER] — An appointment with Lucy! Oh! [*Goes over to* ROGER *without speaking to him, and, still eying him, takes her notes from his hand, tears them up, throws them angrily on the floor, and goes out.*

Scene XVI.

Roger [*in a dazed way, turning toward the* Duchess] — Aunt?

Duchess — An appointment!

Roger — From Bellac!

Duchess — Rubbish!

Roger [*dropping into a chair*] — I've neither arms nor legs any more! [*Voices heard outside; door at the rear opens.*

Duchess [*looking out*] — And there's the Toulonnier! and everybody! and dinner! There, go and put on your evening dress, that will quiet you down: you are pale —

Roger — Suzanne — it isn't possible, really!

Duchess — Huh? No, it isn't possible; — and yet — !

Scene XVII.

Enter Mme. de Céran, Toulonnier, M. *and* Mme. de Saint-Reault.

Mme. de Céran [*presenting* Toulonnier *to the* Duchess] — The Secretary-General, aunt.

Toulonnier [*bowing*] — Your Grace!

Duchess — 'Pon my word, my dear M. Toulonnier, I was going to dine without you.

Toulonnier — You must pardon me, Duchess, but business — ! We are literally overwhelmed. You will kindly permit me to retire early, will you not?

Duchess — Why, certainly, with pleasure.

Mme. de Céran [*embarrassed*] — Hm! Ah! [*As* Bellac *enters, surrounded by* Lucy, Mme. de Loudan, *and* Mme. Arriégo.] M. Bellac!

Toulonnier [*to whom* Mme. de Céran *presents* Bellac] — Pleased to meet you! [Bellac *and he shake hands and talk.*

Mme. de Céran [*returning to the* Duchess] — Make much of him, aunt, please.

Duchess — Your Republican? Get out! A man who gives us twenty minutes, like the King! Fancy that!

Mme. de Céran — At least you will accept his arm to the table?

Duchess — Not a bit of it! Keep him for yourself! I'll take little Raymond for my share: he's livelier.

Roger [*coming out dressed, says with a frightened air to the* DUCHESS] — Aunt!

Duchess — What is it now? What —

Roger — Oh, something —! I just heard in the corridor! Upstairs — oh, it isn't to be believed!

Duchess — Well, what?

Roger — I didn't see anybody, but I positively heard —!

RAYMOND *and* JEANNE *enter stealthily.*

Duchess — But what? *what?*

Roger — Well, the sound of a kiss, up there!

Duchess [*jumping up*] — Of a —

Roger — Oh, but I heard it!

Duchess — But who —

Mme. de Céran [*presenting* RAYMOND *to* TOULONNIER] — M. Paul Raymond, sub-prefect of Agenis. [*They bow.*]

Raymond — M. Secretary-General [*presenting* JEANNE], Mme. Paul Raymond.

Enter SUZANNE *in low neck.*

Mme. de Loudan [*seeing* SUZANNE] — Oh! oh!

Bellac — Ah, there's my young pupil.

[*Low murmurs of astonishment.*

Roger [*to the* DUCHESS] — Aunt, see, low-necked! oh, this is appalling.

Duchess — I don't find it — [*Aside.*] She has been crying.

François [*announces*] — The Duchess is served.

Roger [*going over to* SUZANNE, *who is talking with* BELLAC] — Oh, I wish to know — [*Offering her his arm.*] Suzanne! [SUZANNE *eyes him haughtily, and takes the arm of* BELLAC, *who is talking to* LUCY.]

Bellac [*to* SUZANNE] — That gentleman will make me very envious, mademoiselle.

Roger [*to himself*] — Oh, this is too much!

[*Offers his arm to* LUCY.

Duchess [*aside*] — What does all this mean? [*Aloud.*] Here, Raymond, your arm. [RAYMOND *comes up to her.*] Ah, dear me — one must suffer to be a prefect, my friend.

Paul — The penance is sweet, Duchess.

Duchess — You will sit beside me at table, and we'll talk about government corruption.

Paul — Oh, Duchess! I, an official, to talk of that! Oh no — but I can listen to it!

ACT II.

Scene I.

Present: Saint-Réault, Bellac, Toulonnier, Roger, Paul, Jeanne, Mme. de Céran, Mme. Arriégo, Mme. de Loudan, Duchess, Suzanne, Lucy. *All seated in a row to listen to* Saint-Réault, *who is finishing his reading.*

Saint-Réault — And let no one mistake! Profound in their strangeness as these legends may appear, they are only — as wrote in 1834 my illustrious father — they are only poor fancies compared with the superhuman conception of the Brahmans collected in the Upanishads, or even in the eighteen Paranas of Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas.

Jeanne [*low, to* Paul] — Are you asleep?

Paul — No, no — I hear something like an Auvergnat brogue [*i.e.* full of broad *a*'s].

Saint-Réault [*continuing*] — Such, in plain terms, is the *concretum* of the Buddhic doctrine, and it is there that I will end. [*Applause. All rise.*]

Several Voices [*feebly*] — Excellent! excellent!

Saint-Réault — And now — [*Sudden silence. They sit down again.*] And now — [*Coughs.*]

Mme. de Céran [*eagerly*] — Are you tired, Saint-Réault?

Saint-Réault — Not at all, Countess.

Mme. Arriégo — Yes, you are tired: take a rest, and we will wait!

Numerous Voices — Yes, take a rest! take a rest!

Mme. de Loudan — You cannot always hover on the wing. Alight upon the earth once more, Baron.

Saint-Réault — Thank you, but — Besides, I have finished! [*All rise.*]

Several Voices [*amidst a general buzz*] — Most interesting! A little obscure! Extremely good! Too long!

Bellac [*to the* Ladies] — Materialistic! too materialistic!

Paul [*to* Jeanne] — It's a fluke!

Suzanne [*very loudly*] — M. Bellac!

Bellac — Mademoiselle?

Suzanne — Come over beside me. [*He goes to her.*]

Roger [*low*] — Aunt!

Duchess [*same tone*] — I should certainly say it looks as if she was doing it on purpose!

Saint-Réault [*returning to the table*] — Only one word more! [*Astonishment. They seat themselves again in dismayed silence.*] — or, to express myself better, one vote. — These studies, of which, despite the contracted limits and the slight form which the nature of my audience has imposed upon me —

Duchess [*aside*] — Well! he is polite!

Saint-Réault — — you will perhaps have glimpsed the immense range — these studies, I say, had in 1821, now nearly sixty years ago, for initiator, — I will go farther: for inventor, — the man of genius of whom I have the weighty honor to be the son —

Paul [*to* JEANNE] — He is playing corpse in this act.

Saint-Réault — In the path he traced, I have myself followed him, and not without luster, I venture to say. Another, it is true, after us, has attempted like us to snatch a few words of the eternal truth from the Sphinx until our advent unpenetrated by the primitive theogonies — I mean Revel, a considerable savant, a considerable man. My illustrious father is dead, Revel will soon have followed him to the tomb — if he has not already done so. I therefore remain alone on this new continent of the science of which Guillaume Eriel de Saint-Réault, my father, was the first occupant! Alone! May our rulers [*looking at* TOULONNIER]; may the depositaries and dispensers of power, on whom devolves the perilous charge of selecting a successor to the lamented brother whom we shall perhaps have to weep to-morrow; may these eminent men [*looking at* BELLAC, *who is speaking to* TOULONNIER], despite the solicitations more or less legitimate which beset them, make a choice enlightened, impartial — and determined solely by the triple authority of age, of aptitudes, and of acquired rights; — in a word, a choice worthy of my illustrious father, and of the great science which is his work, and which I am, I repeat, alone in representing to-day.

[*All rise. Applause and great bustle. Buzz of voices in the drawing-room.* Servants *enter and circulate around, carrying plates; and meantime* —]

Distinct Voices, in the hum — First-rate! bravo! bravo!

Paul — Ah, that's right to the point; good enough!

Mme. de Céran — It is a candidacy for the succession to Revel.

Bellac — For the Academy, for the Junior School, for everything!

Mme. de Céran [*aside*] — I suspected as much.

Servant [*announcing*] — General Count de Briais! — M. Virot!

General [*kissing* Mme. de Céran's *hand*] — Countess!

Mme. de Céran — Ah, Senator —

Virot [*kissing* Mme. de Céran's *hand*] — Your Ladyship!

Mme. de Céran [*to* Virot] — And you, my dear Deputy, too late! you arrive too late!

General [*gallantly*] — One always arrives too late in your drawing-room, Countess!

Mme. de Céran — M. de Saint-Réault had the floor: that tells the whole story!

General [*to* Saint-Réault, *bowing*] — Oh! ah! how sorry I am!

Virot [*taking his arm and going to the left*] — Then if the Chamber passes the bill, you will reject it?

General — Why, certainly — at least the first time, hang it! The Senate owes that to itself!

Virot — Ah, Duchess!

[*They bow to her.* Paul Raymond *and* Jeanne *slip out of the drawing-room into the garden.*

Mme. de Céran [*to* Saint-Réault] — Truly, you surpassed yourself to-day, Saint-Réault.

Mme. Arriégo — Yes, yes, surpassed! There can be no finer eulogy.

Mme. de Loudan — Ah, Baron! Baron! what a world you have opened to us, and how captivating are these first lispings of the faith! Ah, your Buddhic Trinity! At the very outset, I am mad over it.

Lucy [*to* Saint-Réault] — Excuse my boldness, monsieur, but it seems to me that in your enumeration of the sacred books there is one lacuna.

Saint-Réault [*piqued*] — You think so, mademoiselle?

Lucy — I did not hear you quote either the Mahábhárata or the Ramáyana.

Saint-Réault — That is because they are not books of revelation, mademoiselle, but simple poems, which their antiquity renders an object of veneration to the Hindoos, it is true, but simple poems.

Lucy — Nevertheless, the Academy of Calcutta —

Saint-Réault [*ironically*] — Ah! that is the opinion of the Brahmins, at all events! — If you hold another about it —

Suzanne [*very loud*] — M. Bellac?

Bellac — Mademoiselle!

Suzanne — Please give me your arm: I want to take the air a moment.

Bellac — But — mademoiselle —

Suzanne — Don't you wish to?

Bellac — But do you think that at this moment —

Suzanne — Come, please! come!

[*Draws him away. They go out.*

Roger [*to the* DUCHESS] — Aunt! she is going out with him!

Duchess — Well, follow them. Wait, I'll go with you. I need a bit of a walk, anyhow: he has made me sleepy with his Brahma, that old bonze. [*They go out.*

Toulonnier [*to* SAINT-RÉAULT] — Full of new views and erudition. [*Low.*] I perfectly understood that allusion at the end, my dear Baron; but it was not needed. You know well enough we are all yours. [*They press each other's hands.*

Mme. de Céran [*to* SAINT-RÉAULT] — Excuse me. [*Low, to* TOULONNIER.] You will not forget my son?

Toulonnier — I do not forget my promise any more than yours, Countess.

Mme. de Céran — You will have your six votes in the Senate, that is agreed: but it is agreed also that after its published report —

Toulonnier — Countess, you know we are all yours.

Paul [*to* JEANNE, *stealthily returning from the garden*] — I tell you we were seen.

Jeanne — Too dark under the trees.

Paul — Even before dinner we were near being caught. Twice is too much! I don't want any more of it.

Jeanne — Indeed! Didn't you promise to kiss me in the corners — yes or no?

Paul [*with animation*] — And you, do you want to be prefect — yes or no?

Jeanne [*with equal animation*] — Yes, but I don't want to be a widow. [MME. DE CÉRAN *approaches them.*]

Paul [*low, to* JEANNE] — The Countess! [*Aloud.*] Really, Jeanne, do you prefer the Bhagavata?

Jeanne — Good gracious, my dear, the Bhagavata —

Mme. de Céran — What? you understood something of all that science, madame? Our poor Saint-Réault seemed to me this evening, however, particularly prolix and obscure.

Paul [*aside*] — What a coincidence!

Jeanne — Toward the end, nevertheless, Countess, he became clear enough.

Mme. de Céran — Oh yes, his candidacy: then you understood that?

Jeanne — And then, the science that rejects faith, has not that itself a little need of faith? — as M. de Maistre wrote.

Mme. de Céran — Extremely fine! — I must present you to some one who will be very useful to you: General de Briais, the senator.

Jeanne — And to the deputy, your Ladyship?

Mme. de Céran — Oh, the senator is the more powerful.

Jeanne — But isn't the deputy the more influential?

Mme. de Céran — Really, my dear Raymond, you have been most fortunate. [*Pressing* JEANNE'S *hand.*] And so have I. [*To* JEANNE.] So be it! to both of them, then!

Paul [*following* JEANNE, *who follows* MME. DE CÉRAN: *low*] — Angel! angel!

Jeanne [*same*] — Shall we go into corners some more?

Paul — Yes, darling! but when there isn't anybody — Why! during the tragedy.

Servant [*announcing*] — The Baroness de Boines, M. Melchior de Boines.

Baroness [*to* MME. DE CÉRAN, *who goes to receive her*] — Ah, my dear, have I arrived in time?

Mme. de Céran — If it is for science, it is too late; if it is for poetry, it is too early. I am still waiting for my poet.

Baroness — Who is that?

Mme. de Céran — An unknown.

Baroness — Young?

Mme. de Céran — I know nothing about him. But I am sure — It is his first work. It is Gaïac who brought him to me. You know Gaïac of the *Conservateur.* They ought to be here by nine — I don't understand —

Baroness — I shall benefit by the opportunity. But it's neither for the savant nor the poet that I've come: it's for *him*, my dear, for Bellac, — I don't know him, fancy. He's so charming, it seems. The Princess Okolitch is crazy over him, you know. Where is he? Oh, show him to me, Countess.

Mme. de Céran — Why, I'm looking for him, and I — [*Seeing* BELLAC *enter with* SUZANNE.] There!

Baroness — Is that he who is coming in there with Mlle. de Villiers?

Mme. de Céran [*in surprise*] — Yes, the very same.

Baroness — Oh, how nice he is, my dear, how nice he is! And do you let him go like that, with that little girl?

Mme. de Céran [*aside, contemplating* SUZANNE *and* BELLAC] — This is singular.

Melchior — And Roger, Countess, may I press his hand?

Mme. de Céran — I doubt if you can just now: he must be in the midst of work. [DUCHESS *and* ROGER *enter. Aside.*] Hm? with the Duchess. What's going on now?

Roger [*to the* DUCHESS, *in great excitement*] — There! did you hear, aunt?

Duchess — Yes, but I didn't see.

Roger — It was certainly a kiss that time!

Duchess — Yes, and a tight one! Mercy! who can it be that kisses like that here?

Roger — Who? who?

Duchess — [*seeing* MME. DE CÉRAN *approach*] — Here's your mother.

Mme. de Céran — What, Roger, not at your work?

Roger — No, mother, I —

Mme. de Céran — Well, but your *tumuli?*

Roger — I have time enough; I'll spend the night at it, I — and then, one day more or less —

Mme. de Céran — Do you think so? The minister is waiting, my dear boy.

Roger — Well, mother, let him wait! [*Draws off.*]

Mme. de Céran [*stupefied*] — Duchess, what does this mean?

Duchess — Say, isn't there going to be some insanity read to us this evening — a tragedy or that sort of thing?

Mme. de Céran — Yes.

Duchess — Well, and your reading is in the other drawing-room, isn't it? Get me rid of it. I need it done, and the sooner the better.

Mme. de Céran — But why?

Duchess — I'll tell you that during the tragedy.

Servant [*announcing*] — The Viscount de Gaïac; M. des Millets!

Duchess — There! that's your poet now.

Murmurs from the Ladies — The poet? it is the poet! the young poet! Where? where?

Gaïac — I have to excuse myself to you, Countess; but my paper detained me. [*Low.*] I was preparing a notice of your

party. [*Aloud.*] M. des Millets, my friend, the tragic poet, whose talent you are immediately to have the power of appraising.

Des Millets [*bowing*] — Your Ladyship —

Duchess [*to* ROGER] — Is that the young poet? Well, he is entirely new.

Mme. Arriégo [*low, to the other* Ladies] — Hideous!

Baroness [*same*] — Quite gray!

Mme. de Saint-Réault [*same*] — Bald!

Mme. de Loudan [*same*] — No talent! He is too ugly, my dear!

Mme. de Céran [*to* DES MILLETS] — We are most fortunate, my guests and I, monsieur, in the favor you are willing to do us.

Mme. de Loudan [*approaching*] — The virginity of a success! Monsieur! how grateful we are!

Des Millets [*confused*] — Ah, madame!

Mme. de Céran — Then this is your first work, monsieur?

Des Millets — Oh, I have written poems.

Gaïac — And poems crowned by the Academy, your Ladyship. — We are laureate.

Jeanne [*low, to* PAUL, *with admiration*] — Laureate!

Paul [*to* JEANNE] — *Mediocritas!*

Mme. de Céran — And this is the first time you attempt the theater? For that matter, maturity of age guarantees maturity of talent.

Des Millets — Alas, Countess, it is fifteen years since my piece was written.

Ladies — Fifteen years! Is it possible? Truly!

Gaïac — Oh, what faith Des Millets has! We must uphold those who have faith, mustn't we, ladies?

Mme. de Loudan — Yes, that is right, certainly. — We must encourage tragedy, mustn't we, General? tragedy —

General [*interrupting his conversation with* VIROT] — Huh? Ah, yes, tragedy! "Horace"! "Cinna"! [By Corneille.] We must! Certainly! A tragedy for the people must — [*To* DES MILLETS.] May we know the title?

Des Millets — "Philip Augustus."

General — Very fine subject indeed! Military subject! — It is in verse, of course?

Des Millets — Oh, General — a tragedy! [always in verse in French.]

General — And in several acts, probably?

Des Millets — Five!

General [*very loud*] — Ha! Hoh! [*Softly.*] So much the better! so much the better!

Jeanne [*low to* PAUL] — Five acts! How fortunate! We shall have time to —

Paul — Hush!

Mme. de Loudan — A well-sustained work!

Mme. de Saint-Réault — Great effort!

Mme. Arriégo — It must be encouraged!

[SUZANNE *is heard to laugh.*

Mme. de Céran — Suzanne!

Duchess [*to* MME. DE CÉRAN] — There, take away that second Euripides — come, and his showman, and the lot of them!

Mme. de Céran — Well, ladies, come into the large drawing-room for the reading. [*To* DES MILLETS.] Are you ready, monsieur?

Des Millets — At your orders, Countess.

Paul [*low, to* JEANNE] — Young ladies first!

Mme. de Céran — Come, ladies!

Mme. de Loudan [*stopping her*] — Oh, first, Countess, *do* let us carry out our little conspiracy, these ladies and me. [*Going up to* BELLAC, *says beseechingly*] — M. Bellac?

Bellac — Marquise?

Mme. de Loudan — We implore one favor of you.

Bellac [*graciously*] — The favor you do me in asking me for it.

All the Ladies — Oh, how sweet!

Mme. de Loudan — This poetical work will probably take up the entire evening; it will be its last radiance. Give us something beforehand. Oh, just as little as you please! We won't tax genius! But something! Talk! Your words will be received like the Biblical manna!

Suzanne — Yes. Oh, M. Bellac!

Mme. Arriégo — Do be nice!

Baroness — We are at your feet!

Bellac [*deprecatingly*] — Oh, ladies —

Mme. de Loudan — Help us, Lucy; you, his Muse! You ask him to!

Lucy — Certainly, I ask it.

Suzanne — And as for me, I want it!

Murmurs — Oh! oh!

Mme. de Céran — Suzanne!

Bellac — Now that violence is used —

Mme. de Loudan — Ah, he consents! an easy-chair!

[*The* Ladies *crowd around him.*

Mme. Arriégo — A table?

Mme. de Loudan — Would you like us to draw back a little?

Mme. de Céran — A little room, ladies!

Bellac — Oh, pray, nothing that recalls —

Virot [*to the* GENERAL] — Ah, but take care: the law is popular.

All — Hush!

Bellac — I beg of you, no stage setting — nothing that proclaims —

Virot — Yes, that's so. But the electors?

General — I am irremovable! [Senator for life.]

Ladies — Hush! oh, hush! Ah, General!

Bellac — Nothing that smells of the lesson, the lecture, the pedant. Pray, ladies, let us chat together: simply ask me questions.

Mme. de Loudan [*with clasped hands*] — Oh, Bellac! something from your book?

Mme. Arriégo [*same*] — From your book, yes!

Suzanne [*same*] — Oh, M. Bellac!

Bellac — Irresistible entreaties! Yet suffer me to resist them. Before being everybody's — my book shall not be anybody's.

Mme. de Loudan [*meaningly*] — Not even — one solitary person's?

Bellac — Ah, Marquise, as Fontenelle says to Mme. de Coulanges, "Take care! perhaps there is a secret there."

All the Ladies — Ah, charming! oh, charming!

Baroness [*low, to* MME. DE LOUDAN] — He has a great deal of wit.

Mme. de Loudan [*same*] — Something better than wit.

Baroness [*same*] — What do you mean?

Mme. de Loudan [*same*] — Wings! You'll see, wings!

Bellac — This is neither the place, nor indeed the hour, you will agree, ladies, to sound the depths of any of those eternal problems in which delight the soaring souls like yours, unceasingly tormented by the mysterious enigmas of life and the Beyond.

Ladies — Ah, the Beyond, my dear, the Beyond!

Bellac — But with this reserve, I am at your commands. And stay — at the very thought there comes back to me one of those questions forever agitated, never solved, upon which I would request your permission to express myself in a word or two.

Ladies — Yes, yes! speak!

Bellac [*seating himself*] — I will speak, then, with an aim at a triple target: to obey you first, ladies; [*looking at* MME. DE LOUDAN] to bring back a wandering spirit —

Murmurs from the Ladies — That is Mme. de Loudan.

Baroness [*low, to* MME. DE LOUDAN, *who modestly droops her eyes*] — That's you, my dear.

Bellac [*looking at* LUCY] — And to combat an adversary who is most dangerous — in every way.

Murmurs from the Ladies — That's Lucy! Lucy! Lucy!

Bellac — It concerns Love!

Ladies — Ah-h! ah-h!

Duchess [*aside*] — For a change!

Suzanne — Bravo! [*Low murmurs.*]

Jeanne [*to* PAUL] — That girl is getting on finely!

Bellac — Love! Weakness which is a strength! sentiment which is a religion! the only one, perhaps, which has not one atheist!

Ladies — Ah-h! ah-h! Charming!

Mme. de Loudan [*to the* BARONESS] — His wings, my dear — see them!

Bellac — I was led this morning to speak — before the Princess, apropos of German literature — about a certain philosophy which makes instinct the base and the rule of all our actions and all our thoughts.

Ladies [*protesting*] — Oh! oh-h!

Bellac — Well, I seize this occasion to declare vehemently that that opinion is not mine, and that I repel it with all the energy of a soul that is proud of existing!

Ladies — First-rate! That is admirable!

Baroness [*low, to* MME. DE LOUDAN] — What a pretty hand!

Bellac — No, ladies, no! Love is not, as the German philosopher says, a pure species-passion, a deceptive illusion whereby Nature dazzles man to achieve its own ends; no, a hundred times no, if we have a soul!

Ladies — Yes, yes!

Suzanne — Bravo!

Duchess [*low, to* ROGER] — She is certainly doing this for a purpose.

Bellac — Let us leave to the sophists and to vulgar natures those theories which abase the heart: let us answer by silence, that tongue of oblivion!

Ladies — Charming!

Bellac — God forbid that I should go so far as to deny the sovereign influence of beauty on the wavering will of men! [*Looking around him.*] I see too much before me wherewith to refute myself victoriously!

Ladies — Ah-h! ah-h!

Roger [*to the* DUCHESS] — He looked at *her!*

Duchess — Yes.

Bellac — But above that perceptible and perishable beauty there is another, unvanquished by time, invisible to the eyes, and which only the purified spirit contemplates and loves with an immaterial love. That love, ladies, is L-l-love; that is to say, the coupling of two souls and the winging of their flight far from terrestrial mire — into the infinite blue of the Ideal!

Ladies — Bravo! bravo!

Duchess [*to herself, half audibly*] — There's a rigmarole for you.

Bellac [*looking at her*] — That love, mocked at by some, denied by others, unknown to the greater number, — I too could say, with my hand upon my heart, "and yet it exists!" In the souls of the chosen few, as Proudhon says —

Several Voices [*protesting*] — Oh! oh! Proudhon —

Mme. de Loudan — Oh, Bellac!

Bellac — A writer I am astonished at myself and apologize for quoting here [as a revolutionary] — in the souls of a chosen few, love has no organs.

Ladies — Ah! oh! noble! charming!

Duchess [*breaking forth*] — Well! there's twaddle for you, with a vengeance!

Ladies — Oh-h! oh-h! Duchess!

Bellac [*bowing to the* DUCHESS] — And yet it exists! Noble hearts have felt it, great poets have sung it, and in the apotheotic heaven of dreams may be seen radiantly seated those immortal figures, immaculate proof of an immortal and psychic love, — Beatrice, Laura de Noves —

Duchess — Laura! But she had eleven children, my dear sir!

Ladies — Duchess !

Duchess — Eleven ! You call that psychic, do you !

Mme. de Loudan — They were not Petrarch's, you know, Duchess : we must be just.

Bellac — Héloise —

Duchess — Ho ! she —

Bellac — And their sisters of yesterday : Elvira, Eloa ! and many others still, unknown or known : for it is more numerous than we should think, that phalanx of chaste and secret loves. I leave it to every woman's judgment !

Ladies — Ah ! yes ! that's true, my dear !

Bellac — No ! no ! the soul has its language which is its own, its aspirations, its pleasures, and its tortures, which are its own, in a word its life. And if it is attached to the body, that is only as the wing is attached to the bird : to buoy it up to the heights !

Ladies — Ah ! ah-h ! ah-h-h ! Bravo !

Bellac [*rising*] — This is what modern science must comprehend [*looking at* SAINT-RÉAULT] — she whom a leaden materialism rivets to the earth ; and I would add, since our revered master and friend has just made an allusion — a little premature, it is true — to a loss which science, I trust, will not soon have to mourn, I would add [*gazing at* TOULONNIER, *to whom* SAINT-RÉAULT *is just then talking*] — speaking for myself also, to our rulers : this is what should be taught to that youth which Revel has instructed with his words, by him, whoever he may be, who may be chosen to instruct it after him ; and not alone — I ask pardon from our illustrious brother — not with the insufficient authority of acquired rights, of erudition, and of age, but with the irresistible might of a voice still young and of an ardor that is not extinct !

All — Bravo ! Charming ! Exquisite ! Delicious !

[*All rise. A deep bass hum of voices. The Ladies surround* BELLAC.

Duchess [*aside*] — One on you, Saint-Réault !

Paul [*same*] — Second candidacy !

Mme. de Loudan — Oh, M. Bellac !

Suzanne — My dear professor !

Baroness — What a head for wit !

Mme. Arriégo — It is beautiful ! beautiful ! beautiful !

Bellac — Ah, ladies, I have only rendered your ideas !

Mme. de Loudan — Ah, charmer, charmer !

Bellac — Then we are reconciled, Marquise ?

Mme. de Loudan — Could any one remain stern with you ? [*Presenting the* BARONESS.] The Baroness des Boines, this is : one whom you have just enchanted and who is altogether yours.

Baroness — I have been weeping, monsieur !

Bellac — Oh, Baroness !

Mme. Arriégo — Wasn't it superb ?

Baroness — Superb !

Suzanne — And how hot it is ! [BELLAC *feels for his handkerchief.*] Haven't you one ? Here ! [*Gives him her own.*]

Bellac — Oh ! mademoiselle !

Mme. de Céran — Suzanne, what *are* you thinking of ?

Suzanne [*to* BELLAC, *who starts to return her handkerchief*] — No, no, keep it, I am going to get you something to drink.

Mme. de Loudan [*going up toward the table before which* SAINT-RÉAULT *has spoken, and on which is the salver with glasses of* eau sucrée] — Yes, yes, something to drink !

Roger [*low, to the* DUCHESS] — Aunt, look !

Duchess [*same*] — All that — that, all of it, is too reckless to be guilty.

Bellac [*low, to* LUCY] — And you — are you convinced ?

Lucy — Oh, I think the concept of love — No, later —

Bellac [*same*] — Directly ?

Lucy — Yes. — Will you have a glass of water ? [*Goes up the stage.*]

Mme. de Loudan [*arriving with a glass of water*] — No ! I ! Mercy on me, it's pure water ! The secret of nectar is lost.

Mme. Arriégo [*arriving with a glass of water*] — A glass of water, M. Bellac ?

Mme. de Loudan — No, no ! Take mine ! me !

Mme. Arriégo — No, me ! me !

Bellac [*with embarrassment*] — But —

Lucy [*holding out another glass to him*] — Here !

Mme. de Loudan — It's going to be Lucy, I'm sure — Oh, but I am jealous ! — No, me, me !

Suzanne [*arriving with another glass of water and pressing it on him*] —Not at all ! I am to be the one — ah, ha ! the fourth thief ! [*i.e.* the one in the story who comes last and succeeds.]

Lucy — But, mademoiselle —

Mme. de Loudan [*aside*] — That chit is cheeky enough —

Roger [*to the* DUCHESS, *indicating* SUZANNE] — Aunt!

Duchess — Well, what's she at now?

Roger — It's since Bellac's arrival.

[*Doors at rear open; the large drawing-room appears lit up.*

Duchess — Now for it! [*To* MME. DE CÉRAN.] Take away your crowd: mind, this very minute.

Mme. de Céran — Come, ladies, — the reading of our tragedy! Let us pass into the large drawing-room! After which we will go and take tea in the conservatory.

Lucy, *Bellac*, and *Suzanne* [*each aside*] — In the conservatory!

Roger [*low, to* DUCHESS] — Did you see Suzanne? She gave a start.

Duchess [*same*] — Bellac positively jumped.

Mme. de Loudan — Come, ladies, the Muse calls us!

[*All begin slowly to pass into the great drawing-room in the rear.*

General [*to* PAUL] — What, my dear sub-prefect, three years!

Mme. de Céran — Come, General!

General [*who is talking with* PAUL] — Ah, yes, Countess, yes, the tragedy! You are right, we must encourage that! — Five acts — come!

Jeanne [*low, to* PAUL] — It's an understood thing — right off!

Paul [*same*] — Yes, yes! It's understood.

General [*turning again to* PAUL] — So you've been three years sub-prefect in the same place? And yet they say this government isn't conservative!

Paul — Oh, that's very good, senator, very good!

General [*modestly*] — Oh —!

Toulonnier [*to* MME. DE LOUDAN] — That is understood, Marquise! [*To* MME. ARRIÉGO.] At your disposal, dear madame!

Bellac [*to* TOULONNIER] — Then, M. Secretary-General, I may hope —?

Toulonnier [*giving him his hand*] — Why, my dear friend, that comes to you by right: you know we are all yours.

[*They go out through the rear.*

General [*to* PAUL, *going up*] — And what is the spirit [political] of your department, my dear sub-prefect? You ought to know, by George! in three years.

Paul — Good heavens, General, its spirit[1] — I'll tell you — its spirit — it hasn't any!

[*They go out through the rear.* SUZANNE *in passing brushes the keys of the open piano with a loud clang.*

Mme. de Céran [*to* SUZANNE, *severely*] — Well, Suzanne, really — !

Suzanne [*with an air of surprise*] — Why, what is it, cousin?

Duchess [*stopping her and looking her in the face*] — What does ail you?

Suzanne [*smiling nervously*] — Me! I'm having a good time, I'm sure!

Duchess — What ails you?

Suzanne — Nothing, aunt, for I'm having a good time, I tell you.

Duchess — What ails you?

Suzanne [*with a choking sob*] — I'm sick at heart, so! [*Enters the large drawing-room and slams the doors violently.*]

Duchess [*to herself*] — It's love, though, or I don't know the symptoms — and I do know 'em!

SCENE II.

Present: ROGER, *the* DUCHESS, MME. DE CÉRAN.

Mme. de Céran [*to the* DUCHESS] — Come, say, what is the matter with him? [*To* ROGER.] Why aren't you at your report? What's going on, I want to know?

Roger — You were too near right, mother!

Mme. de Céran — Suzanne?

Roger — Suzanne — and that man!

Duchess — Be still! you are just talking folderol.

Roger — But —

Duchess [*to* MME. DE CÉRAN] — See here! you caught her with a letter in her hands.

Mme. de Céran — From Bellac?

Duchess — I don't know anything about it!

Roger — What!

Duchess — Disguised hand, not signed. I don't know anything about it!

[1] The real play in the original is on *esprit*, wit.

Roger — Yes, yes. Oh, he doesn't compromise himself — but listen —

Duchess — Be still! [*To* MME. DE CÉRAN.] Listen: "I shall arrive Thursday — "

Roger — To-day! Consequently it's he or I!

Duchess — *Will* you be still, I say! "Thursday: evening, at ten, in the conservatory."

Roger — "Have a sick headache."

Duchess — Oh yes, I forgot: "Have a sick headache."

Mme. de Céran — Why, it's an appointment!

Duchess — Yes, that's evident.

Mme. de Céran — With her!

Duchess — That I don't know anything about.

Roger — Oh, I believe, for all that —

Duchess — Oh, you believe! you *believe!* When it comes to accusing a woman, — mind, a woman! — it isn't enough to believe, you've got to see, and when you've seen and seen again and again — then! — uh — then — well, then it isn't true yet! Ah-h! [*Aside.*] It's always well to say these things to young folks!

Mme. de Céran — An assignation! Didn't I say so? Well, well! she doesn't belie her birth! In my house! Oh, the trollop! Now, Duchess, what are you going to do? Say quick! I have asked them to begin without me; but I can't stay here forever! There, they've begun: I hear the poet. What are you going to do, I'd like to know?

Duchess — What am I going to do? Why, stay here — just. A quarter to ten. If she goes to that appointment, she's got to pass by here, and I shall see her.

Roger — And if she does go to it, aunt?

Duchess — If she goes to it, nephew? Well, I shall go too, and say nothing; and I shall see how far they have got; and when I've seen how far they have got — why, then it will be time enough to do something.

Roger [*seating himself*] — Well! let us wait.

Mme. de Céran — Oh, there's no need of you, my dear: we take care of this. You have your report, your *tumuli* — go on! [*Pushes him toward the door.*]

Roger — Pardon me, mother, it concerns —

Mme. de Céran — It concerns your position. There, go on — go!

Roger [*holding back*] — Pardon me for disobeying you, but —

Mme. de Céran — Well, indeed, Roger — !

Roger — Mother, I beg of you — besides, this evening it would be impossible for me to write a line : I am too — I don't know — I am much disturbed — I have a feeling of not having done for that girl what I ought to have done. I am greatly stirred up — but just think, mother — Suzanne ! — Why, it would be dreadful ! — My situation is frightful ! —

Duchess — Oh, come, you exaggerate !

Roger [*with a sudden start*] — Great heavens !

Mme. de Céran — Roger ! what is in your mind ?

Roger — Why, I am her tutor ; indeed, I have charge of her soul ! — Oh, just think of my responsibility ! the honor of that child ! — Why, it is a sacred deposit I have guard over ! — Oh, I might have let her fortune be stolen and be less criminal ! And you talk to me about *tumuli !* Ugh ! the *tumuli !* the *tumuli !* — It's a question of *tumuli*, isn't it ? To the devil with the *tumuli !*

Mme. de Céran [*terrified*] — Oh !

Duchess [*aside*] — Well ! well !

Roger — Now I mean to say that if this is true, if that scoundrel has dared to forget all he owed to himself, to her, to us — then I go straight to him, and slap his face in public — do you hear me ?

Mme. de Céran — My son !

Roger — Yes, in public !

Mme. de Céran — But this is wandering in your mind — Duchess — pardon —

Duchess — What ! Why, I love him better than that — you know —

Mme. de Céran — Roger !

Roger — No, mother, no ! this concerns me — I will wait — [*Seats himself.*]

Mme. de Céran — Very well — I will wait too.

Roger — You ?

Mme. de Céran — Yes, and I will talk to her —

Duchess — Ah, now, take care —

Mme. de Céran — Oh, not right out, don't worry ; but if she persists, it shall be at least with full knowledge why ! — I will wait. [*Sits down.*]

Duchess — And not for long. Five minutes to ten ! If she is to have a sick headache, it won't hold off much longer. [*As the rear door of the drawing-room opens softly.*] Hush !

Roger — There she is! [*In proportion as the door opens, the poet's voice is more clearly heard declaiming:*]

> "Earth from that villain brood my arm shall purge!
> And as my vengeance to the death I urge,
> Recoiling not before the very tomb —"

[JEANNE *appears. The voice dies gradually out as the door closes.*]

Duchess [*aside*] — The sub-prefectess!

SCENE III.

Jeanne [*stopping abashed on seeing them*] — Oh! —

Duchess — What's here! — So you've had enough already, it seems?

Jeanne — Oh no, your Grace. — But it's because —

Duchess — It's because you don't love tragedy. I see that.

Jeanne — Yes — oh yes!

Duchess — Oh, there's no need of defending yourself, there are more than seventeen others just like you. [*Aside.*] What's she up to? [*Aloud.*] Then it's bad, is it?

Jeanne — Oh, just the contrary.

Duchess — "Just the contrary," as you'd say if somebody trod on your toes?

Jeanne — No, no! — There are even things — things — there's one admirable line!

Duchess — Already!

Jeanne — And one that was greatly applauded. [*Aside.*] What am I to do?

Duchess — Oh! Ah! And what were the words of that admirable line?

Jeanne — "Honor is like a god. — It is like a god that —" I am afraid of spoiling it by quoting it badly.

Duchess — Mph! Now take care, child, take care! And you are going away in spite of that admirable line?

Jeanne — Indeed, it is to my great regret. [*Aside.*] What *am* I to say? [*As an idea strikes her.*] Ah! [*Aloud.*] The fact is, I am not sure but the fatigues of travel — or the heat — I — I don't feel very well!

Duchess — Ah!

Jeanne — Yes, my eyes — I don't see very clearly — I think —I — I've got a sick headache!

Mme. de Céran, Duchess, and Roger [*all rising*] — A sick headache?

Jeanne [*in dismay, aside*] — What's the matter with them now?

Duchess [*after a silence*] — Well, that doesn't surprise me: it's in the air.

Jeanne — Oh, have you got one, too?

Duchess — I? Oh! — they don't come any more at my age — Ah, so you have it — well, but that must be cured, child.

Jeanne — Yes, I'm going out for a little walk — you'll excuse me — won't you?

Duchess — Go ahead — go ahead!

Jeanne [*holding her head as she goes*] — It's making me quite sick — oh dear! [*Aside.*] That makes it straight! gracious me, Paul would have had a fine time getting out of it. [*Goes out by the garden door.*]

Scene IV.

Duchess [*to Roger*] — Oh! huh! you believe, do you? come now, you believe?

Roger — Oh, aunt, this is just a coincidence!

Duchess — A coincidence, perhaps; but you see how one can get on the wrong track, and that he must never — [*Drawing-room door opens; same effect as before.*] Ah now, this time —

[*Voice of the poet* Des Millets *heard through the half-open door and gradually growing faint as the door closes:*

"And be there dozens, e'en a thousand spears," —

Duchess — What a voice that old Tyrtæus has!

"I'd go alone, and brave their futile wrath,
To ask the reason of their coward fears —"

Lucy *appears, going toward the garden door.*

Mme. de Céran and Roger — Lucy!

Scene V.

Duchess — What, Lucy, you taking yourself off!

Lucy [*stopping*] — Excuse me: I didn't see you.

Duchess — That was an admirable line indeed.

"Honor is the god —"

Lucy [*corrects, resuming her course*] —

"Like a god which—"

Duchess — Yes indeed, it's the very same. [*Ten o'clock strikes.* LUCY *reaches the door.*] And you are going to quit in spite of it?

Lucy [*turning round*] — Yes, I need to take the air. I've got a sick headache! [*Goes out.*]

All three [*sitting down*] — Oh!

SCENE VI.

Duchess — Well! really, something queer is going on.

Mme. de Céran — It's another coincidence! —

Duchess — Another! Oh no, not this time! What, everybody, then, everybody — except Suzanne! Come now, there's something — she won't come. I'll bet she won't come. [*Drawing-room door suddenly opens, letting through a burst of tragic but rapid and confused voice; and* SUZANNE *enters precipitately, as if she wished to rejoin some one.*] Here she is!

SCENE VII.

Mme. de Céran [*rising*] — Are you leaving the drawing-room, mademoiselle?

Suzanne [*trying to escape*] — Yes, cousin.

Mme. de Céran — Stay here.

Suzanne — But, cousin —

Mme. de Céran — Stay here — and sit down!

Suzanne [*dropping on a piano-stool, on which she twirls to the side of the speaker at each reply she makes*] — There!

Mme. de Céran — And why are you leaving the drawing-room, pray?

Suzanne — Well, because I got tired of what that old gentleman is reciting in there.

Roger — Is that the real reason?

Suzanne — I'm going out because Lucy has gone out, if you must have another!

Mme. de Céran — Miss Watson, mademoiselle —

Suzanne — Oh, of course! She's perfection, the ideal, the rare bird, Miss Watson is! She can do everything — while I —!

Roger — While you, Suzanne —

Mme. de Céran — There, let me talk to her. While you, mademoiselle, run the streets alone —

Suzanne — Like Lucy!

Mme. de Céran — You dress in the most extravagant fashion —

Suzanne — Like Lucy!

Mme. de Céran — You monopolize Bellac, you make a show of talking with him —

Suzanne — Like Lucy! Doesn't *she* talk to him — [*turning toward* ROGER] and to this gentleman, too?

Mme. de Céran — Oh, but in private! You know very well what I mean.

Suzanne — Oh, as for privacies, one doesn't need to talk them, he can write them — [*looking at* ROGER *and speaking in a low voice*] disguising his handwriting!

Mme. de Céran — What?

Roger [*low, to the* DUCHESS] — Aunt!

Duchess [*same*] — Hush!

Mme. de Céran — Indeed —!

Suzanne — Indeed, Lucy talks to whoever she likes; Lucy goes out when she likes; Lucy dresses as she likes. I want to do what Lucy does, seeing that everybody thinks so much of her!

Mme. de Céran — And do you know why they think so much of her, mademoiselle? It is because, in spite of the independent ways of her nationality, she is reserved, serious, educated —

Suzanne [*rising*] — Oh, indeed! and now what about me? So I haven't been all that, have I? Yes indeed, for six months, till this very evening at five o'clock, I kept at work, I held myself in, and I studied, and as much as she did! and I knew as much as she did! and the objective and the subjective and all that stuff! Well, and what good has it done me? Does anybody care any more for me? Don't they treat me as a little girl just the same? And everybody, yes, everybody! [*Looking askant at* ROGER.] Who pays attention to just me? Suzanne! ho! Suzanne! As if Suzanne amounts to anything! And all because I'm not an old Englishwoman!

Roger — Suzanne!

Suzanne — Oh yes, stand up for her, you! Oh, I know very well what one has got to be to please you — so! [*Taking the* DUCHESS' *eyeglasses and putting them on her nose.*] Æsthetic!

Youth

From the painting by Roussel in the Louvre

Schopenhauer! The Ego! the non-Ego! et cetera! — nyah! nyah! nyah!

Mme. de Céran — Make an end of your hoydenish performances, mademoiselle!

Suzanne [*making a curtsy*] — Thank you, cousin!

Mme. de Céran — Yes, your hoydenish performances! And these senseless things you do —

Suzanne — Seeing I'm only a hoyden, it isn't surprising I do senseless things. [*Growing excited.*] Well, yes, there, I do senseless things! and I do them on purpose, and I'll do them again!

Mme. de Céran — No more with me, I'll warrant you.

Suzanne — Yes, I went out with M. Bellac; yes, I whispered with M. Bellac; yes, I have a secret with M. Bellac!

Roger — You dare —!

Suzanne — And he is a greater scholar than you! And he is better than you! And I love him better than you! Yes, I love him, so! I love him!

Mme. de Céran — I wish to believe that you do not know the gravity —

Suzanne — Yes! yes! I know the gravity! yes!

Mme. de Céran — Then listen to me! Before committing the new folly you threaten us with, stop and think! The publicity, the escapades, the scandal, become you less than anybody else, Mlle. de Villiers!

Duchess — Ah now, take care!

Mme. de Céran — Indeed, Duchess, at least she ought to know —

Suzanne [*repressing her tears*] — Oh, I know!

Duchess — What!

Suzanne [*throwing herself into the* DUCHESS' *arms and weeping*] — Oh, aunt, aunt!

Duchess — Suzanne, there, there, child. [*To* MME. DE CÉRAN.] A lot of need there was to beat that bush, truly. [*To* SUZANNE.] There, what is it you know? what is it?

[*Takes her in her lap.*

Suzanne [*crying as she talks*] — Oh, what! I don't know; but I know very well there's something against me, so now — and has been for a long time!

Duchess — Who told you so?

Suzanne — Oh, nobody — everybody — the people that stare at you, that whisper, that stop talking when you come in —

that kiss you, that call you "poor little thing!" — If you think children don't notice all that — !

Duchess [*wiping her eyes*] — There, dearie, there —

Suzanne — And at the convent too! I saw very well I wasn't like the others, there now! — Oh yes, I saw it! They were always talking — about "my father" and "my mother" — what for? because I hadn't any! And once at recess I was playing with a big girl: I don't know what I did to her — she got mad — and all at once she called me "Miss Illegitimate!" She didn't know what that meant, nor I either! — Her mother had said it before her. She owned as much to me afterward, when we had made up. — Oh, but I was miserable! [*Sobbing.*] We hunted in the dictionary, but we didn't find anything — or nothing we understood. [*Angrily.*] But what does it mean, anyway? — What is it I've done that I am not like other people? that everything I do is wrong? Is it my fault?

Duchess [*kissing her*] — No, my pet. No, my dearie —

Mme. de Céran — I am sorry —

Suzanne [*sobbing*] — Well then, why am I reproached with it, if it isn't my fault? Oh, I am a burden to everybody here! I know it very well; I don't want to stay here any longer; I want to go away! — Nobody here cares for me, nobody!

Roger [*much agitated*] — Why do you say that, Suzanne? It isn't so! on the contrary, everybody here — and I —

Suzanne [*rising in a tempest*] — You!

Roger — Yes, I! and I swear it to you.

Suzanne — You? oh, stop! — Let me alone! I hate you! I never want to see you again! never! — Do you understand? [*Goes toward the garden door.*]

Roger — Suzanne! no, but Suzanne! where are you going?

Suzanne — Where am I going? I'm going to take a walk. I'm going where I please, and right away!

Roger — What for, just now? What are you going out for?

Suzanne — What for? [*Comes down toward him.*] What for? [*Looking him square in the eyes.*] I've got a sick headache! ! !

[*All rise.* SUZANNE *goes out by the garden door.*

SCENE VIII.

Roger [*in great agitation*] — Well, aunt! is it clear now?

Duchess [*rising*] — Less and less!

Roger — Very well, I'm going to see!

Mme. de Céran — Roger! where are you going?

Roger — Where am I going! Well, to do what my aunt said, find out how far they have got! and I swear to you that if it is true — if that man has dared —

Mme. de Céran — If it is true! — *I* will turn him outdoors!

Roger — Well! if it is true — *I* will kill him! [*Goes out by the garden door.*]

Duchess — And if it is true, *I* will make them get married! — Only it isn't true. — Well, we shall see pretty soon: come! [*Tries to draw* Mme. de Céran *away. They hear loud applause in the drawing-room. Noise of chairs and conversation.*]

Mme. de Céran [*hesitating*] — But —

Duchess — Eh? what? another admirable line? No, it's the end of the act! Quick before they get here!

Mme. de Céran — But my guests?

Duchess — Huh? your guests? They'll go to sleep again all right without you! — come, come! [*They go out.*]

Various Voices — Most beautiful! Grand art! So lofty!

Paul [*at the rear door*] — Charming, that act! Wasn't it, General!

General [*yawning very audibly*] — Charming! scored another hit!

[Paul *adroitly slips away, gains the garden door, and disappears. Curtain falls.*

ACT III.

Scene: *Large conservatory drawing-room lighted with gas. Fountain with basin, furnishings, chairs, clumps of shrubbery, clusters of growing plants, behind which one can easily run and hide.*

Scene I.

The Duchess *and* Mme. de Céran *enter by right rear, and hesitate, first looking around, then speaking in a low voice.*

Duchess — Nobody?

Mme. de Céran — Nobody.

Duchess — Good! [*Comes down front and stops.*] Three sick headaches!

Mme. de Céran — It is unheard-of, though, that I should have to leave the poet in this way —

Duchess — Oh, pshaw — your poet reads his verses! A poet, you know, so long as it can read its verses — !

Mme. de Céran — But Roger's passion frightens me! I have never seen him so, never! — What are you doing there, aunt?

Duchess — I'm shutting off this fountain, as you see.

Mme. de Céran — What for?

Duchess — So as to hear better, child!

Mme. de Céran — He's in the garden, I don't know where — Whoever watches her, whoever follows her — What's going to happen? Oh, the little wretch! — What, Duchess, are you shutting off the gas?

Duchess — No, I'm turning it down.

Mme. de Céran — What for?

Duchess — Why, so as to see better, child!

Mme. de Céran — So as to —

Duchess — Good gracious! the less they can see us, the better we can see. — Three sick headaches! and only one appointment. — Do *you* get hold of anything in it?

Mme. de Céran — What *I* don't get hold of is that M. Bellac —

Duchess — And I, that Suzanne —

Mme. de Céran — Oh! she —

Duchess — She? We're going to see, anyway. They can come now, everything is ready.

Mme. de Céran — If Roger finds them here — together — he is capable of —

Duchess — Pshaw! pshaw! we've got to see — we've got to see!

Mme. de Céran — But —

Duchess — Hush! Do you hear?

Mme. de Céran — Yes.

Duchess [*pushing* MME. DE CÉRAN *toward the clump on the right, front wing*] — It was time! Come!

Mme. de Céran — Why, do you want to listen?

Duchess [*from her hiding-place*] — Really, if we are to hear, there's nothing else to do, don't you see? There, now, in this corner we shall be like fairy queens. We'll leave when it's necessary, don't worry. Has anybody come in?

Mme. de Céran [*also in hiding, looking through the branches*] — Yes.

Duchess — Which of the two?

Mme. de Céran — It's she —

Duchess — Suzanne? —

Mme. de Céran — Yes! [*In surprise.*] No!

Duchess — What, not she?

Mme. de Céran — No! not low-necked! It's somebody else!

Duchess — Somebody else? Who?

Mme. de Céran — I can't make out.

Jeanne — Come on now, Paul!

Mme. de Céran — The sub-prefectess!

Duchess — Again!

Scene II.

Jeanne [*to* Paul] — What are you doing at that door, anyway?

Paul [*entering at right door: speaks from the side scene*] — Prudence being the mother of security, I am prudently placing us in security!

Jeanne — How?

Paul — Like this — [*Sound of door creaking.*]

Jeanne [*in alarm*] — Hah?

Paul [*entering*] — Great success!

Jeanne — What's that?

Paul — That? It's a flight indicator I've just put in. Yes, a bit of wood — in the door hinge. By this means, if anybody — I don't say lovers like us, that's unlikely in this precinct, but somebody escaping from a tragedy — takes refuge in this quarter, against all probability — no more danger! He opens the door, it gives out a screak, and we by another door — pst! Is that well enough calculated, hey? Ah, we statesmen! — And now, madame, as we are sheltered from indiscreet observation, I slough off the public man, the private individual reappears, and giving free rein to sentiments too long repressed, I permit you to call me *thou.*

Jeanne — That's nice! thou art charming here!

Paul — I am charming here, because I am easy in my mind here; but to kiss in the halls, as we did lately, you know — when you came to help me open my mail —?

Duchess [*aside*] — It was they!

Paul — Or as we did this evening, in the garden —

Duchess — They again!

Paul — No more of that! Too imprudent for this house — huh? What a house! Did I deceive you? It takes the ambition of being a prefect to make a man come and bore himself in such yawneries!

Mme. de Céran — Hah?

Duchess [*to* MME. DE CÉRAN] — Listen to that! Listen to that!

Jeanne [*making him sit beside her*] — Come here.

Paul [*sitting down, then rising again and walking about agitatedly*] — No, but what a house! Hosts, and guests, and everybody! And Mme. Arriégo! And the poet! And the Marquise! And that icy Englishwoman! And that wooden Roger! There isn't anybody but the Duchess that's got common sense.

Duchess [*to* MME. DE CÉRAN] — One for me!

Paul [*with conviction*] — But the rest — ugh!

Duchess — One for you!

Jeanne — Oh, come here, now!

Paul [*sits down, then rises and walks about as before*] — And the reading, and the literature! and the candidacy! Oh, that Revel candidacy! Imagine, a crafty old fellow who dies — every evening, and comes to life again every morning with another office! [*Starts to sit down, then resumes.*] And Saint-Réault! Oh, Saint-Réault! and the Rama-Ravanas and all that Buddha balderdash!

Mme. de Céran [*indignantly*] — Oh!

Duchess [*laughing*] — He's so funny!

Paul — And say, the other one, that ladies'-Bellac, with his Platonic love!

Jeanne [*dropping her eyes*] — He is a fool!

Paul [*sitting down*] — So you found it out, too? [*Rising in fresh rage.*] And the tragedy — oh, the tragedy! —

Jeanne — Why, Paul, what ails you?

Paul — And that old Philip Augustus with his admirable line! Lord, everybody has made some of those admirable lines — that's no excuse for reading them. — I've made some myself.

Jeanne — You?

Paul — Yes, I! When I was a student and not rich. I even sold them!

Jeanne — To an editor?

Paul — No, to a dentist! "The Filliad, or the Art of Filling Teeth." Poem, three hundred lines! Thirty francs. — Listen to this: —

Jeanne — Oh no, please don't!

Paul —

"Muse, if amongst the many ills that Heaven
In wrath to blacken all the world has given,
One o'er the others most appalls good taste,
'Tis that whose seat within the mouth is placed."

Jeanne [*trying to stop him*] — Oh, there, Paul!

Paul —

"Ah, how alluring seems extraction then!
Imprudent! Heal the tooth, but do not draw!
Ah, pull it not, e'en though it be decayed!
Who knows but some day skillful hands of men
May fill and save it, whichsoe'er its jaw,
This lure of smiles and sound digestion's aid."

Duchess [*laughing*] — Ha, ha! Isn't he amusing!

Jeanne — What a regular boy you are! Who would believe it, to see you in the drawing-room! [*Mocking him.*] "Good Heavens, senator, the democratic flood — the treaties of 1815 — " Ha, ha, ha!

Paul — Well, and your own self, say! You come pretty close to it with the mistress of the house!

Mme. de Céran — Eih?

Paul — My compliments!

Jeanne — But, my dear, I was doing what you told me.

Paul [*mocking her*] — "I was doing what you told me!" Oh, you hypocrite, with your soft little voice! Ah, you gave it to the Countess: Joubert, and Latin, and Tocqueville! and made it all up yourself!

Mme. de Céran — What! made it up herself!

Duchess — That reconciles me to her.

Jeanne — Oh, I've no remorse, so there! A woman that lodges us at the two ends of the house!

Mme. de Céran [*rising*] — If I had only asked her to leave it!

Duchess — Keep still.

Jeanne — And it was just spite! Yes! yes! I'm sure of it. A woman knows well enough what new-married people are,

doesn't she? They always have something to say to each other, I mean.

Paul [*tenderly*] — Yes, always.

Jeanne — Always, really and truly? — always, like that?

Paul — What a lovely voice you have! I was listening to it just now — while I was talking about the treaties of 1815. Fine, sweet, enveloping — ah, the voice is music to the heart, as M. de Tocqueville says.

Jeanne — Oh, Paul! I don't want you to laugh at serious things.

Paul — Ah, well, let me be a little frisky, please: I'm so happy here! Lord! but it's a toss-up to me whether I'm prefect of Carcassonne or not, just this moment!

Jeanne — It's always a toss-up to me, sir: that's the difference!

Paul — Dear little woman! [*Kisses her hands.*]

Mme. de Céran [*low, to the* DUCHESS] — But this is an indiscretion.

Duchess [*same*] — I don't dislike it myself!

Paul — Ah, but I've such a stiff lot of arrears to make up — you understand! — not counting payments in advance. When shall we be free at present? Darling little girl, you don't know how much I adore you.

Jeanne — Yes, I know — by myself —

Paul — My Jeanne!

Jeanne — Oh, Paul! Always like that, keep saying it over, always!

Paul [*very close to her and very tenderly*] — Always!

Mme. de Céran [*low, to the* DUCHESS] — But, Duchess —

Duchess [*same*] — Oh, they're married!

[*Door squeaks.* PAUL *and* JEANNE *rise in alarm.*

Paul and Jeanne — Hah!

Jeanne — Somebody's coming!

Paul — Fly! — as they say in the tragedies.

Jeanne — Quick, quick!

Paul — You see, don't you? — my precautions —

Jeanne — Already! What mean luck!

[*They escape at the left.*

Mme. de Céran [*passing to the left*] — Well, it's lucky they were interrupted.

Duchess [*greeting her*] — My goodness, I'm sorry for it! Yes indeed: there's an end to our laughing now.

Scene III.

Bellac *enters by right rear.*

Bellac — What a noise that door makes!

Mme. de Céran [*low, to the* Duchess] — Bellac!

Duchess [*same*] — Bellac!

Bellac — Well, you can't see very well here.

Mme. de Céran — It was true! You see it was all true.

Duchess — All? no, there's only half of it yet!

Mme. de Céran — Oh, the other half isn't far off, you'll see!

Duchess — Anyhow, it can't be anything more than a prank, a schoolgirl's imprudence — it isn't possible. [*Door creaks.*] There she is! Oh, dear me, my heart is beating — in matters like this there's no use being sure, you're never certain — do you see her?

Mme. de Céran [*looking out*] — Ah! it's she! — And very shortly Roger, who is watching her, will be here too. Hadn't we better show ourselves, Duchess?

Duchess — No — no — I want to know how far they've got; I want to have a clean breast made of it.

Mme. de Céran [*still looking out*] — I am half dead with uneasiness — low-necked — it's she, it's really she —

Duchess — Oh, the little jade! — Let me see — [*Looks through the leaves, then after a moment says* :] Hah!

Mme. de Céran — What now?

Duchess — Look.

Mme. de Céran [*looking*] — Lucy!

Duchess — Lucy.

Mme. de Céran — What in the world does this mean?

Duchess — Oh, I don't know yet, but I like it better already.

Scene IV.

Bellac *and* Lucy *searching for each other at the right;* Mme. de Céran *and the* Duchess *hidden on the left;* Paul *re-entering at left rear, followed by* Jeanne, *holding him back.*

Jeanne [*low, to* Paul] — No, no, Paul! no!

Paul [*same*] — Yes — yes! stop a minute to see! here at this hour it can't be anybody but lovers, I tell you — In this house! No! that would be too funny —

Jeanne — Look out!

Paul — Hush!

Lucy — Are you there, M. Bellac?

Paul — The Englishwoman!

Bellac — Yes, mademoiselle!

Paul — And the professor — "The Englishwoman and the Professor: A Fable!" Didn't I tell you! An intrigue! An appointment! Huh! I guess I'm not going away, not much!

Jeanne — Why not?

Paul — After that, do you want to go away yourself?

Jeanne — No I don't!

[*They hide behind a clump at left rear.*

Lucy — Are you on this side?

Bellac — Over here! I beg your pardon — the conservatory is generally better lighted — I don't know why, this evening — [*Goes toward her.*]

Mme. de Céran [*low, to the* DUCHESS] — Lucy! But then what about Suzanne? I'm clear off now.

Duchess [*same*] — Wait a bit: I fancy we're going to get on again.

Lucy — But, M. Bellac, what does this kind of appointment mean? And your letter of this morning? Why should you write to me?

Bellac — Why, to talk with you, dear Miss Lucy. This is not the first time we have isolated ourselves to exchange our thoughts, is it?

Paul [*bursts out laughing; says low, to* JEANNE] — Ho! — exchange — ! I didn't know it was called that —

Bellac — Hemmed in as I am here, what other means had I of talking with you, all by yourself?

Lucy — What other? You merely had to give me your arm and leave the drawing-room with me. I am not a young French girl.

Bellac — But you are in France.

Lucy — In France, as elsewhere, I do what I like; I have no need of secrecy, and still less of mystery. You disguise your handwriting — you don't sign it — even to your pink paper itself — Oh, how thoroughly a Frenchman you are!

Paul [*low, to* JEANNE] — Born sly.

Bellac — And how thoroughly you are yourself the austere Muse of learning, the superb Polyhymnia! the cold and proud Pierian — Come, sit down!

Lucy — No! no! And look how all your precautions have turned against us: I have lost that letter.

Duchess [*rather loud*] — I'm on!

[LUCY *moves toward the left.*

Bellac — What is it?

Lucy — Didn't you hear anything?

Bellac — No. Ah! you lost — ?

Lucy — And what do you wish him or her to think that might find it?

Duchess [*low, to* MME. DE CÉRAN] — Are you on now?

Lucy — True, there was no envelope — consequently no address —

Bellac — Not my handwriting, nor my signature — so you see I've done the right thing. Anyway, I meant well, dear Miss Lucy: pardon your professor, your friend, and — sit down, please —

Lucy — No! tell me what you have to say to me in such secrecy, and let's go in again.

Bellac [*detaining her*] — Wait! Why didn't you come to my course to-day?

Lucy — Precisely because I passed my time hunting for that letter. What had you to talk to me about?

Bellac — How impatient you are to leave me! [*Gives her a package of papers tied with a pink ribbon.*] There!

Lucy — Proofs!

Bellac [*with emotion*] — Of my book.

Lucy [*moved in turn*] — Yours? — O Bellac!

Bellac — I wanted you to be alone in knowing it before everybody, alone!

Lucy [*taking his hands with effusion*] — Ah, my friend, my friend!

Paul [*holding in his laughter*] — Oh, no! such a love-gift — whew! [BELLAC *moves to the left.*

Lucy — What ails you?

Bellac — No, nothing — I thought — You will read this book in which I have put my thoughts, and you will find us in perfect communion, I am sure, except on one point — Oh! that one!

Lucy — Which?

Bellac [*tenderly*] — Is it possible you do not believe in Platonic love?

Lucy — I! oh, not in the least.

Bellac [*graciously*] — Well! — But with us two?

Lucy [*innocently*] — No, that is friendship.

Bellac [*sentimentally*] — Pardon me! it is more than friendship and less than love!

Lucy — Then if it is more than the one and less than the other, it is neither the one nor the other. And now, thank you once more, thank you a thousand times: but let's go back in, won't you? [*Starts to leave.*]

Bellac [*still detaining her*] — Wait!

Lucy — No, no! let's go in.

Paul [*to* JEANNE] — She doesn't bite.

Bellac [*holding her back*] — Oh, do wait, pray! One word! One word! Enlighten me or enlighten yourself! — The problem is worth the trouble. Now see, Lucy —

Lucy [*growing excited and passing over to the right*] — Now see, Bellac! See, my friend, your Platonic love —! Philosophically, I say, it cannot be maintained!

Bellac — Permit me: that love is a friendship —

Lucy — If it is friendship, it is no longer love!

Bellac — But the concept is double!

Lucy — If it's double, it isn't single!

Bellac — But there is a confusion! [*Sits down.*]

Lucy — If there is a confusion, there is no longer a character! — And I go farther! [*Sits down.*]

Paul [*to* JEANNE] — She has bitten!

Lucy — I deny that confusion can be possible between love, which has individuation for base, and friendship, a form of sympathy — that is to say, of a thing where the Ego becomes in some sort the non-Ego. I deny it absolutely, oh, absolutely!

Duchess [*low, to* MME. DE CÉRAN] — I have heard people talk love often enough, but never like this.

Bellac — Oh, come, Lucy!

Lucy — Come, Bellac! Yes or no? The principal factor —

Bellac — Come, Lucy, take an instance. Suppose a certain two beings — two abstractions — two entities — a certain man, a certain woman — both loving each other, but with the vulgar, physiological love — You understand me?

Lucy — Perfectly!

Bellac — I will suppose them in a situation like this, alone in the night, together, what will happen?

Duchess [*to* MME. DE CÉRAN] — I can guess myself — can't you?

Bellac — Fatefully — follow me close — fatefully, it will produce the following phenomena: —

Jeanne [*to* PAUL] — Oh, isn't it comical!

Paul — Well, madame — ?

Bellac — Both of them, or more probably one of the two, the first, the man —

Paul [*to* JEANNE] — The male entity!

Bellac — Approaches her whom he believes himself to love — [*Approaches her.*

Lucy [*drawing back a little*] — But —

Bellac [*softly detaining her*] — No, no! — You will see! They dart their glances into each other's glances; they mingle their sighs and their tresses —

Lucy — But, M. Bellac —

Bellac — And then! — And then — there will pass into their Ego — independently of their Ego itself — an uninterrupted series of unconscious acts, which, by a sort of progress of slow but inescapable *processus*, will hurl them, if I dare say so, into the fatality of a foreseen catastrophe, where the will counts for nothing, the intellect for nothing, the soul for nothing!

Lucy — Allow me! — That *processus* —

Bellac — Wait, wait! — Suppose now another couple and another love: in place of the physiological love, the psychological love; in place of that certain couple — two exceptions — do you follow me still?

Lucy — Yes.

Bellac — They, too, seated near each other, approach one another.

Lucy [*still edging away*] — But then it's the same thing!

Bellac [*still holding her back*] — But wait! there is a shade of difference. Let me show you the shade. They too may dart eyes into eyes and mingle their tresses —

Lucy — Oh, indeed? [*Rises.*]

Bellac [*making her sit down again*] — Only! — Only! — It is no longer their beauty which they contemplate, it is their soul; it is no more their voices which they hear, it is the very palpitation of their thought! And when at last, by a *processus* entirely different though cognate, they too shall have arrived at that dim and embarrassed point where being knows itself not, a sort of delicious torpor of the will which seems to be at once the *summum* and the *terminus* of human felicity — they will wake not upon the earth, but in the midst of heaven; for

their love soars far beyond the stormy clouds of common passions into the pure ether of sublime idealities!

[*Silence.*

Paul [*to* JEANNE] — He's going to kiss her!

Bellac — Lucy! dear Lucy, do you not understand me! Oh! say that you understand me!

Lucy [*disturbed*] — But! — It seems to me the two concepts —

Paul — Huh! the concepts! Oh, aren't they too funny!

Lucy [*still disturbed*] — The two concepts — are identical!

Paul — Oh! identical —

Bellac [*passionately*] — Identical! — Oh, Lucy, you are cruel! — Identical!!! But just realize that everything here is subjective!

Paul — Subjective! Oh, I *must* do some crazy thing!

Bellac [*conquered by passion*] — Subjective! Oh, Lucy, do comprehend me!

Lucy [*conquered by emotion*] — But, Bellac! — Subjective!

Jeanne [*to* PAUL] — He's not going to kiss her!

Paul — Then I'm going to kiss you!

Jeanne [*defending herself*] — Paul! Paul! [*Sound of kisses.*]

Bellac and Lucy [*rising in alarm*] — Hah?

Duchess [*in astonishment, rising also*] — What? How? Are they kissing each other?

Lucy — Somebody — somebody is there!

Bellac — Come, come! take my hand!

Lucy — They've been listening to us! O Bellac, I told you so!

Bellac — Come!

Lucy — But I am horribly compromised!

[*Goes out by left rear.*

Bellac [*following her*] — I will make reparation, my dear miss, I will make reparation!

SCENE V.

JEANNE *and* PAUL *leave their hiding place, laughing.*

Paul — Oh, Platonic love! Ha, ha, ha!

Duchess [*aside*] — Raymond!

Jeanne — And the Ego, and the *processus* and the *terminus!* Ha, ha, ha!

Duchess [*leaving her hiding-place in turn: aside*] — Ah, you rogues! Wait a little! [*Walks softly toward them.*]

Paul — Huh? the gay old Tartufe, with his double-ender declarations fitted with escapement! [*Imitating* BELLAC.] "But, dear miss, the concept of love is double!"

Jeanne [*imitating* LUCY] — But the principal factor —!

Paul — Now see, Lucy!

Jeanne — Now see, Bellac!

Paul — But there is a shade of difference! Let me show you the shade!

Jeanne — But then it is identical —

Paul — Identical! Oh, cruel — just realize that everything here is subjective!

Jeanne — O Bellac! subjective!

[*Sounds of kisses which the* DUCHESS *smacks upon her hand.*

Paul and Jeanne [*rising in alarm*] — Hah!

Jeanne — Somebody!

Paul — Caught!

Jeanne — They've been listening to us.

Paul [*drawing her away*] — Come, come!

Jeanne [*as she goes*] — O Paul, perhaps in the beginning we too —

Paul — I'll make reparation, dear angel, I'll make reparation!

[*They disappear on the left.*

SCENE VI.

Duchess [*laughing*] — Ha, ha, ha! the comical things! — They are dears — but they deserve a lesson. — Ha, ha! — I can laugh — now. — Ha, ha! — Now then, Lucy. [*To* MME. DE CÉRAN.] Your daughter-in-law is getting along! What did I tell you? — Well, are you on now? Suzanne — that appointment — that letter?

Mme. de Céran — Yes, it was that letter of Bellac to Lucy that Suzanne found!

Duchess — And that she took for a letter of Roger to Lucy. That's why she was so furious, the jealous little thing!

Mme. de Céran — Jealous? Duchess, you don't mean to say she's in love with my son?

Duchess — Huh! maybe you'll keep on wanting to make him marry the other one? Well! and the *processus?*

Mme. de Céran — The other one? No, certainly not — but Suzanne, never, aunt, never!

Duchess — We haven't got that far yet — unluckily. Meanwhile, go and find your tragedy and your Revel candidacy again. Go on! As for me, I'll take the job of recapturing your son, and making him put up his big sword. All's well that ends well. Mph! Ah! All the same, I feel easier! Much ado about no great matter — but it's over! over! over! Let's go!

[*They start to leave from the left. Door on the right creaks.*

Both [*stopping*] — Huh?

Duchess — Another! Oh, I see, your conservatory! It's Figaro's chestnut trees, your conservatory! — Oh, well, this is gay.

Mme. de Céran — But what one can this be?

Duchess — Who? [*Struck with an idea.*] Oh! [*To* MME. DE CÉRAN, *pushing her toward the left.*] Go back into the drawing-room, I tell you.

Mme. de Céran — Why not stay here?

Duchess [*as before*] — You can't leave your guests forever, can you?

Mme. de Céran [*straining her eyes to see*] — But really, who is it?

Duchess [*as before*] — So long as I'll tell you — go quick, before whoever it is — you can't any longer —

Mme. de Céran — That's true; besides, I shall come back for the tea.

Duchess — For the tea! that's it. Go on, go on! and quick, quick! [MME. DE CÉRAN *goes out at the left.*

SCENE VII.

Duchess — Who can it be? Either Roger watching Suzanne, or Suzanne watching Roger. [*Gazing to the right.*] Yes, yes, it's he, sure: it's my Bartholo [jealous guardian]. [*Looking to left.*] And now Miss Jealous, who thinks Roger is with Lucy, and wants to see a little of what's going on. That's it. Third sick headache. My count is straight! Ah, if Fate doesn't do something with this, she's an awkward huzzy! [*Softly lowering her eyes.*] Let's help her a little.

Suzanne [*entering and hiding*] — I know his walk around the conservatory has got to take him past here. I was embarrassing him.

Roger [*same*] — She took a walk around the conservatory; she's in it. I saw her come in. Well, at last I shall know what conclusion to come to.

Duchess — They are playing hide-and-seek!

Suzanne [*listening*] — That Englishwoman seems to be late!

Roger [*same*] — Hm! Isn't Bellac here yet?

Duchess — They won't end it up — not unless I take a hand. — St!

Roger — She's calling him. Oh! if I dared take his place, as long as he isn't here. That would be a good way to find out how far they've got.

Duchess [*aside*] — Now then! now then! — St!

Roger — Hang it, that will last till it stops. As he doesn't come, I shall have learned something any way — St!

Duchess — There!

Suzanne [*aside*] — He takes me for Lucy. — Oh, how I'd like to know what he is going to say to her.

Roger [*in a suppressed voice*] — Is that you?

Suzanne [*in a suppressed voice*] — Yes! [*Aside, resolutely.*] Worse luck!

Roger [*aside*] — She takes me for Bellac.

Duchess — Oh, good — now! Go on, my dears, go on! [*Disappears behind the clumps at left rear.*]

Roger — Did you get my letter?

Suzanne [*aside, in a rage speaking into his face without his seeing or hearing her*] — Yes, I did get your letter! — Yes, I got it, and you don't much suspect it either. [*Aloud, softly.*] Why, unless I had, should I have come to your appointment!

Roger [*aside*] — Yours! — Well, is it clear enough this time? — Oh, unfortunate child! — We shall see, at all events. [*Aloud.*] I was so afraid you might not come — dear.

Suzanne [*aside*] — "Dear!" — Oh! [*Aloud.*] But you saw me leave the drawing-room immediately — dear.

Roger [*aside*] — They are certainly on a familiar footing! — There's no more to say! — But I must know absolutely — *Aloud.*] Why do you keep so far away from me? [*Goes toward her.*]

Suzanne [*aside*] — Oh, he'll see I am smaller than Lucy. [*Sits down.*] There! like that —

Roger — Don't you want me to come and sit beside you?

Suzanne — I should like it.

Roger [*aside, going toward her*] — Oh! she'd like it! — What astonishes me is that she should take me for Bellac; for I've neither his voice nor — Anyway, it will last till it stops: let's make use of it. [*Sits down near her, turning his back to her; aloud.*] How good it was of you to come! Then you do love me a little, dear?

Suzanne [*also turning her back to him*] — Yes, dear.

Roger [*rising and walking about; aside*] — She loves him! — Oh, the scoundrel!

Suzanne — What ails him?

Roger [*returning to his seat beside her*] — Ah — well, then, let me be near you as at other times.

Suzanne [*aside, indignantly*] — He takes her hand!

Roger [*aside, indignantly*] — She actually lets him take her hand! — It is shocking!

Suzanne [*same*] — Oh —!

Roger [*aloud*] — Are you trembling?

Suzanne — It's — it's you that are trembling —

Roger — No, no, it's you! — Are you — [*Aside.*] We shall see — worse luck! [*Aloud.*] Are you afraid?

Suzanne [*aside, in a fury, rising*] — You — !

Roger [*aside, drawing a long breath*] — They haven't got there! [*Suzanne returns, after a determined gesture, and seats herself beside him without saying a word.*]

Roger [*terrified, aside*] — What? — farther? — But then — [*Aloud.*] Ah! you are not afraid?

Suzanne — Afraid — with you?

Roger [*aside*] — "With"! — But how far has that scoundrel carried his misconduct? Oh, I'll find out — I want to know — I want — I ought — I have charge of her soul — [*Aloud, with decision.*] Well, then, come: if you are not afraid, why do you avoid me? [*Draws her toward him.*

Suzanne [*indignantly*] — Oh!

Roger — Why do you turn away from me?

[*Puts his arm around her waist.*

Suzanne [*as before*] — Oh!

Roger — Why do you shield your face?

[*Bends toward her.*

Suzanne [*springing to her feet*] — Oh! this is too much!

Roger — Yes, it *is* too much!

Suzanne — Look me in the face, now! Suzanne! Not Lucy — Suzanne, do you understand?

Roger — And I am Roger! Not Bellac — Roger, do you understand?

Suzanne — Bellac?

Roger — Oh, unhappy child! So it was true? — Ah, Suzanne, Suzanne! How shameful it is! How shamefully you have treated me! — At any rate, he will come, and I will wait!

Suzanne— What? Who?

Roger — Then you don't perceive yet that I read your letter?

Suzanne — That letter! — It was I that read it — *your* letter!

Roger — My letter? — Bellac's letter!

Suzanne — Bellac's? — Yours!

Roger — MINE?

Suzanne — Yours! — To Lucy!

Roger — To Lucy? — To you! to you! to you!

Suzanne — To Lucy! to Lucy! to Lucy! — who lost it!

Roger [*stupefied*] — Lost it!

Suzanne — Ah, ha! I was there when she claimed it back from the servant! You can't say — And I found it myself!

Roger [*in sudden illumination*] — Found it!

Suzanne — Yes, I did — found it, and the appointment — and the sick headache — and everything! — I knew everything. And I wanted to see, and I came — and you took me for her —

Roger — I?

Suzanne [*her tears beginning to master her*] — Yes, you! Yes, you! — You took me for her, and you told her you loved her! — Yes! — Yes! — Then why did you tell me you didn't love her? — Yes — me — a little while ago — you told me so, and said you weren't going to marry her. — Why did you tell me so? There was no need of telling me so. Marry her if you want to, I don't care, but there was no need of telling me that! — You deceived me — you lied to me! It isn't right! If you loved her, it wasn't necessary — it wasn't necessary — [*Throwing herself into his arms.*] Ah, don't marry her! don't marry her! don't marry her!

Roger — Suzanne — Oh, my dear Suzanne! how happy I am!

Suzanne — Ah — ?

Roger — So you found that letter? It wasn't to you?

Suzanne — To me?

Roger — Well! no more was it to me — I swear it to you!

Suzanne — But —

Roger — Don't I swear it to you! It was to Lucy! — to Bellac! — to the rest of them! What does it matter! Oh, I understand now! — You thought — Yes — yes — like me — I understand! Ah, dear child — dear Suzanne! — How afraid I have been — great Heavens, how afraid I have been!

Suzanne — Why, what of?

Roger — What of! Yes, that's true! — It's absurd! — No, no! don't hunt. — It's hateful! — Forgive me, do you understand? I ask your forgiveness —

Suzanne — Then you are not going to marry her?

Roger — Why, didn't I tell you —

Suzanne — Oh, I don't understand a thing about that. Just tell me you are not going to marry her, and I'll believe you —

Roger — No, indeed! — no, indeed! — What a child it is! — There, don't cry any more — wipe your eyes, dear little girl, dear Suzanne. We are not angry any more — don't cry any more.

Suzanne [*in the center*] — I can't stop myself.

Roger — Why not?

Suzanne — I haven't anybody but you, Roger. I don't want you to leave me.

Roger — Leave you?

Suzanne [*still crying*] — I am jealous, you know very well — You don't understand that yourself — no — no — Oh, I saw that well enough this evening, when I tried to make you mad about M. Bellac — You weren't looking at me all by myself — Bellac was nothing to you.

Roger — He? But I wanted to kill him!

Suzanne — Kill him! [*Throws her arms around his neck.*] Oh, how sweet you are! Then you believed —

Roger — Be still — don't let us talk any more about that — it's done with — it's forgotten, nothing ever happened! Let's begin all over again! at my arrival, at yours, a little while ago. — Good morning, Suzanne, good morning, my dear girl — how long it has been since I have seen you! Come here — come close to me — as you did just now. [*Sits down, and makes her sit beside him.*]

Suzanne — O Roger, how good you are now! How you tell me things! You love me better than you do her, then, really, truly?

Roger [*gradually warming up*] — Love you? Why, isn't it my duty to love you? my duty as relative, as tutor? my duty as an honest man above all? Love you! See here, when I read that letter — I don't know what went on inside me — oh! it was then I understood what serious affection — oh yes, I love you, dear little girl, dear purity, and more than I thought myself, and I want you to know it. [*Very tenderly.*] You do know it, don't you? Don't you feel that I love you ever so much — dear little Suzanne?

Suzanne [*somewhat surprised*] — Yes — Roger —

Roger — You look at me — I surprise you — I don't convince you — I am so little used to outbursts of tenderness, so awkward at caresses — I don't know how to say these things — I — The education of the heart is done by mothers, and you don't know mine — she has made me a dig, a learned man. Learning has filled my life. You have been its one rest, its one smile, its one youth! You have no one but me, do you say? Well! and I, my own little dear, what have I had to love but you, you alone — and I didn't realize it, no I didn't! You captured me as children do capture you, without their knowing it or your suspecting it; by the powerful expansion of their being, by the obsession of their grace, by the enticement of their weakness, by everything that makes one love it, because he yields himself up and submits himself to what he protects. I was your master, but I was your pupil too. While I shaped your soul to thought, you shaped mine to tenderness. I taught you to read — you taught me to love. It was on your little pink fingers, it was on the golden silk of your baby hair, that my ignorant heart spelled its first kisses. You came there a tiny mite — into the heart where you have grown up, and which now you fill entirely, do you comprehend? entirely. [*Silence.*] Well, are you reassured?

Suzanne [*rising in a quiver, says in a low voice*] — Let's go!

Roger [*in surprise*] — Why? Where?

Suzanne [*deeply agitated*] — Somewhere else.

Roger — But why?

Suzanne [*same*] — It's dark.

Roger — But just now — !

Suzanne — Oh, just now — I didn't see.

Roger — No, stay here — stay here! Where shall we be better off than here? I have so much yet — My heart is so full — I don't know why I tell you all this — it's true — but

it isn't right to tell you of it — O Suzanne — stay here awhile — dear Suzanne — [*Holds her back.*]

Suzanne [*trying to free herself*] — No — no — please — you —

Roger [*in surprise*] — *You?* — You don't call me *thou* any more!

Suzanne [*still more agitated*] — I — please!

Roger — But just now —

Suzanne — Oh, but not now any more —

Roger — But why?

Suzanne — I don't know — I —

Roger — Well! — once more! You are crying — Have I made you feel bad?

Suzanne — No — oh, no!

Roger — Then — I have offended you without meaning it — I've —

Suzanne — No — no — I don't know — I don't understand — I'm — let's go away, please —

Roger — Suzanne — but I don't understand any more — I don't see what —

Scene VIII.

The Duchess *appears.*

Duchess — And do you know why? It's because neither one of you sees clear. [*Turns on the gas. The scene lights up.*] There!

Roger — Aunt!

Duchess — Oh, my dear bantlings, how happy you make me! — Come, kiss your wife, you!

Roger [*stunned at first*] — My wife! — Suzanne! [*Looks at his aunt, looks at* Suzanne: *then with a cry.*] Oh, it's true — I love her!

Duchess [*joyfully*] — There now! That makes one that sees clear. [*To* Suzanne.] Well — and you?

Suzanne [*dropping her eyes*] — Oh, aunt!

Duchess — Oh, you saw it already, it seems. Women always have quicker eyes — Huh? What a fine invention gas is. — Is everything all right? — There's nobody left but your mother —

Roger — What?

Duchess — Oh dear, that will come hard. — There she is! — There's the whole of them; the whole tragedy! — Not a

word — Let me fix it — I'll take charge of that! — But what's going on out there?

Scene IX.

Mme. de Céran *enters joyfully in advance; then, one after another through all the doors,* Des Millets *surrounded by ladies, the* General, Bellac, Lucy, Mme. de Loudan, Mme. Arriégo, Paul, *and* Jeanne, — *all the characters of Act II.*

Mme. de Céran — Great news, aunt!

Duchess — What?

Mme. de Céran — Revel is dead!

Duchess — Are you joking?

Mme. de Céran — It's in the evening papers. Look! [*Hands her a paper.*

Duchess — Really now! [*Takes the paper and reads.*

Mme. Arriégo [*to the poet*] — Most beautiful! Superb!

Mme. de Loudan — Most beautiful work! and so lofty!

General — Very remarkable! There's one admirable line!

Des Millets — Oh, General!

General — Yes! yes! — Most admirable line! Er — how does it go? — "Honor is now like a god who can no longer have a single altar." Er — most admirable line!

Paul [*to* Jeanne] — Rather long!

Bellac [*to* Lucy, *as he holds a paper*] — He died at six.

Saint-Réault [*to his wife, as he also holds a paper*] — Yes, at six — oh, I've got M. Toulonnier's promise.

Bellac [*to* Lucy] — Toulonnier promised me solemnly —

Mme. de Céran [*to the* Duchess] — Toulonnier is ours entirely!

Duchess — Well, where is your Toulonnier, then?

Saint-Réault — They have just sent him a dispatch.

Mme. de Céran [*aside*] — Confirmatory! — that's all right — but why? [*Seeing him enter.*] Ah! at last!

All together — It's he! Oh! Ah!

[Toulonnier *comes down in front. They surround him.*

Mme. de Céran — My dear Secretary-General!

Saint-Réault — My dear Toulonnier!

Mme. de Céran — Well! that dispatch — ?

Bellac — It's about poor Revel, isn't it?

Toulonnier [*with embarrassment*] — About Revel, yes.

Bellac — Well, what does it say?

Duchess [*looking at* TOULONNIER] — It says he isn't dead, on my word!

Mme. de Céran, Bellac, Saint-Réault [*showing their papers*] — But the newspapers?

Duchess — They got fooled!

All — Oh!

Duchess — For once! [*To* TOULONNIER.] Didn't they?

Toulonnier [*cautiously*] — He isn't dead, that's a fact!

Saint-Réault [*dropping into a chair*] — Again!

Duchess — And they've even appointed him to something else, I'll bet!

Toulonnier — Commander of the Legion of Honor.

Saint-Réault [*springing to his feet*] — Always!

Toulonnier [*showing his telegram*] — It will be in to-morrow's *Officiel* — look! [*Mournfully, to* SAINT-RÉAULT.] I am deeply concerned —

Duchess [*aside, looking at* TOULONNIER] — He knew it when he came: he is exceedingly clever. [*Aloud.*] And I have great news of my own to announce to you, likewise.

All — Ah! [*They turn toward the* DUCHESS.]

Duchess — In fact, I have two pieces of it.

Lucy — Indeed?

Mme. de Loudan — Two? What are they, Duchess?

Bellac — What ones?

Duchess — First, the marriage of our friend Miss Lucy Watson to Professor Bellac.

All — To Bellac? What?

Bellac [*low*] — Duchess!

Duchess — Ah! reparation must be made!

Bellac — Rep— Oh, but with delight! Ah, Lucy!

Lucy [*in astonishment*] — Pardon me, madame —

Duchess [*low*] — Oh, reparation must be made, child!

Lucy [*same*] — There can be no reparation here: there is no offense, madame, and you are wrong in saying "must."

Bellac — How is that?

Lucy — My feelings are in accord with my will.

[*Gives* BELLAC *her hand.*]

Bellac — Oh, Lucy!

Duchess — Come, so much the better! No. 1!

Mme. de Loudan — Ah, Lucy! you are happy among all women!

Duchess — Second piece of news!

Mme. de Loudan — Another marriage!

Duchess — Another one, yes!

Mme. de Loudan — Why, this is the feast of Hymen!

Duchess — The marriage of my dear nephew, Roger de Céran —

Mme. de Céran — Duchess!

Duchess — To a girl I love with all my heart —

Mme. de Céran — Aunt!

Duchess — My sole legatee!

Mme. de Céran — Your —

Duchess — The heir of my property and my name! My adopted daughter, in a word, — Mlle. Suzanne de Villiers de Réville.

Suzanne [*throwing herself into her arms*] — Oh, mother!

Mme. de Céran — But, Duchess — !

Duchess — Find one of a richer and better family, then.

Mme. de Céran — I don't say that. But still — [*To* ROGER.] Consider, Roger.

Roger — I love her, mother!

Duchess — No. 2! [*Looking about her searchingly.*] I still have on hand — [*To* PAUL.] Ah! come here a minute, you. How are you going to make reparation, eh?

Paul [*abashed*] — Ah, Duchess, was it you?

Jeanne [*in confusion*] — Oh, madame, you heard — ?

Duchess — Yes, little masquerader, yes, I heard.

Paul — Oh!

Duchess — But as you two didn't say anything very bad about me, I'll forgive you. And you shall be a prefect, there!

Paul — Oh, Duchess! [*Kisses her hand.*]

Jeanne — Oh, madame! Gratitude, as St. Evremond says —

Paul [*to* JEANNE] — Oh, there's no need to bother about that any more now!

THE MAN IN BLACK.

By JOSÉ ECHEGARAY.

Played for the first time in the Teatro Español, Madrid, April 22, 1898.

(Translated for this work by Ellen Watson.)

[José Echegaray, the one great recent Spanish dramatist, was born at Madrid in 1832, but spent his early years and received his education in Murcia. His specialty was mathematics and his profession civil engineer; after practical study in several provinces, he was made mathematical professor in the School of Engineers, and published scientific works, but was interested also in political economy. In the revolutionary government of 1868 he was cabinet minister and Director of Public Works; and Minister of Finance in 1872–1873, under Amadeus, resigning on the proclamation of the republic. He then went to Paris and wrote a one-act play, "The Check-Book," represented anonymously in Madrid two years later, the author having meantime become cabinet minister again. This was followed at short intervals by four others, "The Avenger's Bride," "The Last Night," "In the Hilt of the Sword," "How it Begins and How it Ends," which made no special mark. But "Madman or Saint" (1877) was universally recognized as showing that the middle-aged politician, mathematician, and engineer had become the greatest dramatic force in Spain. He has written many others since, the most famous being the historical drama, "The Great Galeoto," accounted in Spain as ranking him next to Shakespeare, but hardly feasible to introduce him to an English audience; among others are "What Cannot Be Told," "A Shoreless Sea," "In the Bosom of Death," "Conflict between Two Duties," "A Merry Life and a Sad Death," "The Sublime in the Commonplace," — mostly ethical tragedies, with motives and characters often hardly intelligible except to a Spaniard, but with emotional and ethical situations of immense power, if shrouded in gloom. The one here given is one of his latest and most characteristic: it is singular that the artist-hero is the precise counterpart of Barrie's "Sentimental Tommy," and his final self-analyses might almost have been taken bodily from the book or its sequel. The occasional quaintness of the stage directions are the author's own, and left undisturbed. It may be mentioned that Echegaray has also written comedies of merit, "The Embryo Critic" being ranked first of these.]

Persons of the Drama.

Eleanor.	Jacinth.
Arnold.	Trinidad.
Fabian.	Paulina.
Albert.	Camilla.

Leonardo.

ACT I.

A luxuriously furnished reception-room. Daytime.

Scene I.

Fabian — It is Leonardo's voice. What can have happened to him? [*Goes to rear of stage.*

Jacinth — I don't know. He doesn't sound happy! [*Follows* Fabian.

Fabian — It does not take much to over excite him, poor fellow! I believe he's bound to lose his mind, some day.

Jacinth — And they say he's a great artist, a genius! It makes me laugh!

Fabian — A genius! the idea! Any eccentric artist passes for a genius, nowadays. And what does his work amount to, after all? Has the fellow performed any miracles yet?

Jacinth — That's just what I say! What is his wonderful work? He merely chisels out of a block of marble these statues that are more or less beautiful. It's astonishing, Fabian!

Fabian [*returns to rear of stage*] — He's at it again, wrangling like mad! These geniuses have no regard for others. And on Eleanor's birthday, too. She is receiving, and the parlor is full of people; the conservatory, too, full of ladies and all her young girl friends.

Jacinth — And gentlemen as well, gentlemen of good family, like yourself, Fabian!

Fabian — Thank you, Jacinth! But in spite of all this, Leonardo is crying out as if he were at a bull-fight! He is impossible!

Jacinth — He is so used to handling his marble and his chisel that he treats human beings as if they were of stone, too, and hammers away on us!

Fabian — And Arnold cannot endure him.

Jacinth — Well, for that matter, Arnold is another odd type. He makes me laugh, too!

Fabian — He seems to be a man of good standing in society.

Jacinth — He is a sinister, mysterious being. "The man in black," I call him!

Fabian — Well, this "man in black," as you call him, has great influence with Eleanor. Whoever wishes to find welcome in this house must keep on the right side of Arnold.

Jacinth — And Leonardo makes himself very much at home here. No doubt some day he will be lord and master of the house, and of its mistress too. But how he does hate Arnold! It makes me laugh, when they begin their discussions!

Fabian — Leonardo is an exception: at all events Arnold was Eleanor's guardian, when she was left an orphan. She looks up to him as if he were her own father, and her confidence in him is absolute.

Jacinth — Oh, of course no one can doubt that he is an honorable and serious man.

Fabian — And besides that, he is deeply religious.

Jacinth — No one doubts that either.

Fabian — He has managed Eleanor's immense fortune with the utmost integrity. She must be worth some four millions!

Jacinth — What! A fortune for a prince or a princess.

[*He sighs.*

Fabian — Ah, ha! That does not make you laugh, eh, Jacinth?

Jacinth — Not at all! It makes me sigh with envy!

Fabian — Yes [*smiling*], Arnold has administered Eleanor's affairs with the same interest he would devote to his own — that is to say, Arnold's very own!

Jacinth — Ah, ha! now you make me laugh again!

[*Laughs maliciously.*

Fabian [*at rear*] — But do you hear? There he is, at it again!

Scene II.

LEONARDO *enters, at rear, greatly excited.*

Leonardo — No, no! we must come in here. There is no other way!

Jacinth — But what's the matter with you? Some great crisis? Has the Parthenon been destroyed, or have you and Eleanor come to blows?

Fabian — What were all those cries we heard?

Leonardo — What's the matter, indeed! Everything's the matter! Everybody has conspired to torture me! That is, they are striving to destroy my illusions, and for a man of my temperament that is the greatest possible torture.

Jacinth — Something serious, then?

Leonardo — I should say so! Is not this Eleanor's birthday?

Fabian — To be sure.

Leonardo — And I, in secret, in most perfect secrecy, have prepared a surprise for her. Such a surprise!

Jacinth — A birthday present?

Leonardo — A present! How prosaic you are, Jacinth! Listen to me [*with an air of greatest mystery*]. From a block of purest marble, without a flaw, without a shadow of stain, — an ideally perfect marble — I have chiseled Eleanor's divine form! Never before have I been so inspired with my work. Never before has my chisel wrought such true lines in the unyielding stone! Never, never have I come so near to actual truth and beauty! It is her very self. The execution perhaps is not so perfect, but the very soul is there! No, never mind what they say, that marble contains a soul! For once in my life I have attained my desire, my ideal!

Fabian — Those who ought to know about such things say you have great talent.

Leonardo — Oh, I am a mere nobody! My work amounts to nothing! Probably I shall never rise above mediocrity; — but for all that, Eleanor is there, in the marble. [*His tone is half tragic, half comic.*] And Eleanor's bust is there, in the corridor! And there it must wait until a good-for-nothing, worthless, treacherous door is opened! Oh, this locked door, this accursed door!

Fabian — But how is this? I don't understand.

Jacinth — No more do I! Listen to this! A divine bust of heavenly pure marble standing out in the cold of a prosaic, every-day corridor! Here's a pretty state of things! It makes me laugh!

Leonardo — Yes, do laugh! Laugh, as you are sure to do at everything, for now you have a reason for it!

Fabian — How so?

Leonardo — It's all simple enough. Eleanor knows nothing about her present, of course.

Jacinth — As I understand it, that's where the surprise comes in!

Leonardo — Of course. So Louis and I dragged in the bust without a word to any one, and got it safely as far as the door to Eleanor's apartments. My plan was simply this: to enter without being seen, and place the bust in the center of her favorite room. Then I meant to half draw the curtains and close the shutters of the balcony so that the light should be perfect, neither

too strong nor too dull. One direct ray was to light up the forehead, the hair, and the eyes; while the background was to be left somewhat dark. In short, everything was most carefully planned out. Then you see, I leave it there, and Eleanor comes in: "Ah, what is this?" she cries, "a bust, of me? It is I, myself! Leonardo must have made it!" Her eyes fill with tears, and I — I am great, immortal! No longer Leonardo de Monforte, but Leonardo da Vinci! The Raphael, the Michel Angelo of sculpture! And, moreover, I am happier than the elect of the elect, those who are nearest the throne of God! [*With ever increasing exaltation.*]

Fabian — And at this rate, where are you going to stop?

Jacinth — Oh, no, not *going*, since you remember he's left in the corridor!

Leonardo — So — you have said it! With your sharp tongue and with malice aforethought, as usual you have hit the mark! In the corridor! That is the prosaic, wretched, mocking truth!

Jacinth — And my dear Leonardo, you must see what will happen. Eleanor comes out to bid good-bye to some friend, stumbles against the block of marble, and says crossly: "Why, what is this? they seem to be leaving odd bits of furniture round in the passageway!"

Leonardo [*very serious and much troubled*] — True! That is just what's sure to happen!

Jacinth — Then she will turn to her servants and say: "Have it taken out of the way at once!"

Leonardo [*repeats*] — "Taken out of the way at once!"

Jacinth — "How careless, to leave such bulky things in the corridor!" And then she will walk by with her friends down the passageway, and the divine bust is left standing! And our illusions, our hopes, our love, are left there, out in the cold, blocking the way! [*He laughs.*]

Fabian — Such is life, my dear Leonardo!

Leonardo — Such is life, to be sure! But I am not resigned to it. I shall struggle, and — I shall conquer.

Jacinth — But for this once you must acknowledge you are conquered.

Leonardo — Not at all! A strong will may work wonders.

Jacinth — But Arnold can do more, as it seems. He has locked all the doors of Eleanor's apartments, that you may not profane them!

Leonardo — You are right! It must be he has done this.

Jacinth — "The man in black!"

Leonardo — If I were only a painter, I would put Arnold in a mortar and grind him to powder!

Fabian — What for?

Leonardo — To paint in my blackest backgrounds, in pictures that were full of shadows!

Jacinth — Now you may just as well confess you are afraid of him.

Fabian — And that he inspires you with respect.

Leonardo — Me? Watch, and you shall see.

[*Goes to side door and knocks.*

Jacinth — He does not answer.

Leonardo — If he is there, he is bound to answer.

[*Knocks again.*

Scene III.

Arnold *appears in the doorway, and remains standing there, blocking the entrance. He is dressed in black, and is somewhat ministerial in appearance.*

Arnold — You called!

Leonardo — I did.

Arnold — And why?

Leonardo — Because I desire to enter.

Arnold — These are Eleanor's apartments.

Leonardo — And that is why I desire to enter them.

Arnold — But no one is allowed to enter here.

Leonardo — You seem to be there!

Arnold — It is my prerogative.

Leonardo — And mine, too!

Arnold — Not yet.

Leonardo — Let us not discuss this point.

Arnold — I have no desire to. [*Would close door.*

Leonardo — But do not fasten the door.

Arnold — And why not, pray?

Leonardo — Because I object to it.

Arnold — You?

Leonardo — Yes, I! [*A pause, during which they look at each other fixedly.*] Come, Arnold, let us have done with this! I must go in there.

Arnold — For what purpose?

Leonardo — It is easy enough to tell you, but I do not recognize your right to ask me.

Arnold — But I have the right!

Leonardo — Then keep it! — and stand aside! And in any case, if you care to go in with me, you can put an end to your doubts.

Arnold — I am not in the least curious.

Leonardo — Don't drive me into doing something I shall be sorry for! [*Advances toward* ARNOLD *with great violence, but still with self-control.*]

Arnold — To use force?

Leonardo [*coldly*] — No, not that, but — begging you most respectfully to allow me to pass. [*Looks at him as he advances, in such a way that* ARNOLD *steps to one side.*]

Arnold [*watching him as he enters*] — Very well!

Jacinth — A good subject for a picture: "Darkness forbidding Light to enter!"

Fabian — No, no! Say rather: "Prudence forbidding Folly to enter!"

SCENE IV.

Fabian — Well, Arnold, Leonardo's a bit weak in his mind, is he not?

Arnold [*bowing*] — Like all the rest of us — or almost all.

Jacinth — But he surely more than any one else — the privilege of his artistic temperament.

Arnold — He is more violent than the majority, it is true. But at heart we find everywhere the same passions, the same wretchedness, the same blindness! And where shall we seek for a remedy? If you will allow me — [*Exit slowly at rear.*

SCENE V.

Jacinth — Now he will go and tell Eleanor what has happened.

Fabian — And Eleanor will say that Leonardo is right about it.

Jacinth — Of course she will.

Albert [*enters hastily*] — Ah, good day, Fabian! how do you do, Jacinth? [*They shake hands.*

Jacinth — You look excited. What's up?

Albert — You may well say so! I am all but in for two affairs!

Fabian — With whom, with whom?

Albert — With Alcaraz and Poveda. How they went for Leonardo!

Fabian — But they are great friends of his!

Albert — Perhaps that's why they pitch into him so! According to them he's a fool without talent, his marriage with Eleanor is a disgraceful speculation, he's an adventurer, and more of the same sort. I was ready to slap them in the face!

Jacinth — I don't agree to all this, of course, but as for his being crazy, Fabian says he is, and Arnold, too. And as to the marriage, it's not a disgraceful speculation, no — but still, it's plainly a speculation.

Albert — What! you, too! I tell you Leonardo has a great talent and a noble heart. As to the speculation, you must know that in his own right he has more than five thousand dollars for his yearly income, and his art brings him in fifteen or twenty thousand every year. So he is neither a beggar, a swindler, nor an adventurer!

Jacinth — Very true! But for all that, between Leonardo's somewhat doubtful twenty thousand and Eleanor's perfectly certain six millions, there is a margin for speculation!

Fabian — Really, friends, this sort of discussion is shocking!

Jacinth — I would like to know what Arnold thinks.

Albert — Arnold is a sworn enemy of Leonardo's, and what is more, he is a hypocrite of the first water.

Fabian — Little by little you are taking Leonardo's part, and I am going to stand up for Arnold. He is an honorable, upright man, severe and devoted to his church, a man whose equal it would be difficult to find. He does not approve of Eleanor's marriage with Leonardo because he would have Eleanor lead a spiritual life, and Leonardo lives such a sensuous, worldly one. She is a true Christian and an angel of light, and he a pagan artist! Arnold longs to see her a sister of charity, and not a sculptor's model. He would strive to save her soul —

Jacinth — And her millions, at the same time, eh? Fabian, you will make me die of laughing! In some great final burst of laughter I shall breathe my last! So our friend Arnold is an anchorite, a missionary, a mystic, a — transcendentalist, is he? Well, then, let me tell you what he really is. I won't say he is not a man of honor, I grant you that, but stupid

rather than honorable. He dresses in black because it is so much simpler than to wear colors, and adheres to his plain ways to save the trouble of being elegant. He says little because he has few ideas, and he is religious because his fathers were before him. He opposes Eleanor's marriage because he is as jealous as a cat. In short, he is an insignificant fellow, well fitted to be King-at-arms, a royal usher, or to play some such foolish rôle.

Albert — No, no! You are wrong there. He is a most dangerous man, and you have not understood his true character. He is a man of violent, uncontrolled passions, and in his fiftieth year, the dangerous period for vigorous natures such as his. Thro' the torrid zone he is passing to the frozen poles of old age, but oh! this crossing the equator! Let me tell you [*mysteriously*], with all his years, his homeliness, his severe aspect, he is in love with Eleanor! Yes, I tell you, madly in love with her.

Fabian — Angels and ministers of grace, defend us! You're madder than Leonardo himself.

Jacinth — My dear fellow, you're as mad as a hatter! The love-affairs of the "man in black"! the last thing out!

Albert — Oh, yes! you may laugh if you like.

Fabian — Oh, what a lover! A lover that is constantly taking Eleanor to visit the poor, to dry their tears, exposing her to all manner of contagious diseases! He, in love! Truly, an ideal lover!

Jacinth [*to* FABIAN] — It's blind ignorance if nothing worse, to drag this beautiful and sensitive girl almost every day thro' workhouses and hospitals, exposing her to every kind of fatal disease.

Fabian — Is it better to take her, as Leonardo does, to listen to immoral plays and sensuous music, or to visit museums whose glory is the nude in art, a mere mockery of modesty?

Jacinth — And what if one of these days our poor Eleanor should take some infectious disease?

Fabian — Arnold goes with her, and is equally exposed to all danger of that kind.

Jacinth — Much harm would it do if he did!

Albert — Ah, how blind you are! Can you not see thro' the cruel conduct of this jealous wretch? Do you not see that the villain is exploiting Eleanor's exquisite sensitiveness? that he is attempting to separate this saintly girl from all earthly

passion? And if Eleanor should die as the result of one of these charitable visits, Arnold would feel it greatly, for he loves her. Yet I believe he would rather see her in her grave than at the altar!

Fabian — Better stop there, Albert.

Albert — And why not say what was on my mind to say?

Jacinth — After all, we none of us know what Arnold really is.

Fabian — A saint!

Jacinth — A fool!

Albert — A jealous lover!

Jacinth — Well, we're just where we were before!

Fabian — We shall see when we get to the end.

Albert — Here comes Leonardo.

Scene VI.

Leonardo *enters.*

Leonardo [*to himself, not noticing the others*] — Well, it's all right now, and I've placed it just as I wanted to. But what will Eleanor say! The background ought to be darker.

Albert — Well, Leonardo!

Leonardo — Ah, you here! Thanks, I — [*Shakes hands absent-mindedly.*]

Jacinth — Did you find the right place, and a good light for the bust?

Leonardo — Pretty fair — I did what I could. [*He is still buried in thought.*]

Albert — A bust?

Jacinth — Yes, of Eleanor — a surprise. He has just placed it in the room of his beloved, like the statue of a goddess in her temple.

Leonardo — Yes, like the statue of a goddess! And what of Arnold?

Fabian — He went away very much vexed with you.

Jacinth — Perhaps to tell Eleanor all about everything.

Leonardo — What more is there to tell? But I am sorry not to have met him!

Fabian — To give him satisfaction?

Leonardo — Or to offer him an insult.

Albert — I vote for the insult.

Fabian — You treat him but with slight respect!

Leonardo — Did he commission you to say so to me?

Fabian — No, he did not.

Leonardo — In that case you will excuse my not answering. What are you talking about, Albert?

Albert — Something that interests you.

Leonardo — Me? Only two things in this world are of interest to me, — my father and Eleanor. And then a few friends — very few.

Albert — Then I can tell you at once a great deal that will interest you.

Leonardo — Your telling them is sure to interest me.

Albert — Listen then, Leonardo. [*Would take him to one side.*

Leonardo [*to* ALBERT] — Wait, I believe Arnold is coming, and it would be a great favor to me if you would leave me alone with him. [*Aloud.*] Why will you not all go in and see Eleanor's bust? — not at all because it is my work, but for the sake of her whom it represents. And I hope you will tell me your opinion frankly.

Jacinth — With the greatest pleasure! [*To the others.*] Come, shall we go in?

Albert — Of course we will! A bust of Eleanor, and by you? Let's go to see it at once, and admire it.

Fabian — This way then, please!

ARNOLD *appears in doorway, at rear, and stops there.*

Leonardo — Thank you! Go in, go in! I am not so strict as Arnold is, and would let every one in! Especially when I want to be left alone!

SCENE VII.

Leonardo — Arnold, would you kindly come nearer, and have a talk with me?

Arnold — Certainly.

Leonardo — I am frank and loyal, and hope you will be so with me.

Arnold — I am so with everybody.

Leonardo — All the better! In that case you will probably find that this is no occasion for getting — over-excited.

Arnold — I never allow myself to become over-excited!

Leonardo — I do then, and very often!

Arnold — A bad mistake! But you were going to say —?

Leonardo — Yes, I will begin without preamble. You are opposed to my marriage with Eleanor, and show it in the most determined manner. You gain nothing by this, and yet you are doing your very worst.

Arnold — Certainly I am.

Leonardo — You confess it then? [*Restraining his fury.*

Arnold — Why not?

Leonardo — I do not — no, this frankness is just what I want. And why do you oppose our love in this way?

Arnold — Because it seems to me disastrous.

Leonardo — For whom?

Arnold — For her. Your father did not leave you in my charge as Eleanor's father left her, and so I am not responsible for you as I am for her.

Leonardo — Can you think for a moment that I would not — that is, that I shall not — make her happy?

Arnold — Exactly, you would not make her happy.

Leonardo — Am I not a man of honor?

Arnold — Possibly — as honor is understood in your class of society.

Leonardo [*violently*] — Good Heavens!

Arnold — I do not doubt you are, according to that code.

Leonardo — Enough! Do I not love Eleanor with all my heart, and with all my soul?

Arnold — With all your heart, — yes, as hearts go, perhaps you do. But with all your soul, as souls love — no!

Leonardo — You would presume to read my soul, perhaps? Listen! [*A pause.*] A soul is not what you imagine it to be — a convenient mask for pretended severity and sanctity. If a soul exist, it must feel, aspire, and love. And so I swear to you that I love Eleanor with my whole soul, with all that within me is capable of feeling, of aspiration, and of love!

Arnold — These are but words —

Leonardo — Perhaps I do not make my meaning clear, but at all events I speak with perfect sincerity.

Arnold — We are never so deceived as by our own selves.

Leonardo — But what do you take me to be?

Arnold — An artist — a man who is in love with beauty — and what you love in Eleanor is her beauty. You love this woman as you might love a beautiful picture or a divine statue,

if they should come to life. It is a love inspired by your eyes, which revel in light and color; by your ears, which absorb sweet harmonies; by your touch, anticipating all manner of soft delights. In short, a love of the senses, nothing more nor less.

Leonardo [*restraining himself*] — Arnold, you lie!

Arnold — If you think you can provoke me, you are merely wasting your time.

Leonardo [*barely concealing his contempt*] — I know it!

Arnold — Then we have done.

Leonardo — No, Arnold, I would have you know that I am ready to give my life for Eleanor.

Arnold — Yes, suddenly, in some great emergency, in a moment of delirium, you might. But slowly, hour by hour, day by day, year in, year out, I doubt it, Leonardo! [*Laughs harshly.*]

Leonardo — A little more, and you'll succeed in making me lose my temper!

Arnold — Ah? I thought it already was partially so!

Leonardo — Arnold! no more of this! I feel a wave of hot blood rushing to my brain!

Arnold — To your studio, then! — quick, your marble, your chisel! These are your moments of inspiration!

[*Would go, but* LEONARDO *detains him.*

Leonardo — So then, it is to be war to the knife between us?

Arnold — No.

Leonardo — Still, you mean to do your utmost to persuade Eleanor to give me up?

Arnold — Yes.

Leonardo — It is a struggle for life or death between us two, then?

Arnold — It is a struggle in which I fight on the Lord's side.

Leonardo — Enough! But listen to this. You may deny me every virtue, but you can hardly deny that I have a most determined will.

Arnold — Yes, yes, you are obstinate enough. A strong will is one thing, and obstinacy is quite another!

Leonardo — You may call it what you please, but you must learn to know me before we begin our truggle. [*A pause.*] I used to be weak, and I made up my mind I would make myself strong. I *am* strong! I used to be awkward, and I

determined to learn the use of all the different weapons — and now I use them all with skill. An obscure artist, and an idle one at that, I resolved to win a name for myself — and I have won name and fame! I was nineteen years old when I saw this woman for the first time. I saw her, and she took immediate possession of my soul — this soul which you would deny me! She was driving swiftly by in a carriage, and was passing out of sight; — I might have lost her forever, but I felt I must not, nor did I. Do you know what followed? As I could not enter the carriage by force I threw myself in front of the horses, so that they might trample me under their feet. I fell, covered with blood — the driver pulled up, and recognized me. Thro' her and for her I desired to win fame, and won it. I strove to win her love, and it is mine. I have dreamed of making her my wife, and she shall marry me! Obstacles? I shall conquer them all, destroy them, annihilate them. For life or death! You are forewarned!

Arnold — I am, indeed!

Leonardo — Two words more. As it is the only talk we need have together, it does not matter if it is a little long.

Arnold — It does not tire me.

Leonardo — I am more than weary with it all, but here again my strong will comes in play — to conquer my fatigue. Kindly listen to what I have to tell you. A friend of mine, almost a brother to me, fell in love with Eleanor. I broke off all connection with him, and would have fought a duel with him, but he would not consent. You see that even friendship does not hold me back! They say in Madrid that my marriage with Eleanor is a shameful speculation. My fortune is modest, and she is very rich, I know, and appearances are against me. My honor is at stake, but you see that even dishonor is unable to hinder me. My father I love with all my soul — do you hear? — with all my soul, and in this case even you cannot deny me a soul! My father is opposed to the marriage, but though he should beg me with tears in his eyes, and with threats of his everlasting displeasure to give Eleanor up, I would not consent! My life — yes, I would gladly give him my life, but my love — no, not my love. And so you see my father himself is powerless to prevent me. Now you may infer how much importance I am likely to place on what you think and on what you say!

Arnold — You have done?

Leonardo — I have.

Arnold — Then I will say no more.

Leonardo — Your coolness irritates me beyond words! Eleanor loves me, and her heart is mine. Do you not feel your own weakness in this battle? On what do you depend?

Arnold — On God! But you will not understand that. I will put it in other words. I pin my faith on what you call fate, — destiny, — chance, or — what not!

Leonardo — Enough! till later.

Arnold — Till later, then.

Leonardo — We will end our talk here, if you please.

Arnold — It suits me perfectly.

Leonardo — Your servant, sir!

Arnold — And I yours — in so far as it is consistent with my duty.

Scene VIII.

Albert [*enters, full of enthusiasm*] — Admirable! divine!

Leonardo — So you like it?

Albert — Like it? Why, man, it is Eleanor herself! This marble is Eleanor! In it she is alive, she breathes, and smiles! A very miracle!

Leonardo — Really? really?

Arnold [*apart*] — Poor fool!

Leonardo — And the others? What do they say?

Albert — They were all — somewhat against their wills, to tell the truth — filled with astonishment and admiration!

Leonardo — They, too!

Albert — That's the greatest triumph! But now Eleanor must come. She must see it herself. Shall I call her?

Leonardo — Yes.

Albert — Then I will go and get her and all her friends.

Leonardo — But do not tell her what it is. Be careful, won't you? Say a surprise, and nothing more.

Albert — You think me so stupid as to tell!

Leonardo — Oh, I know you're not, — but do go, — go at once.

Albert — You will see how she will stand before it, lost in deep admiration! — how she will cry out with delight!

[*Goes out eagerly.*

Leonardo — May God grant it!

Scene IX.

ARNOLD *seated in large arm-chair, cold and impassive as if of stone.* LEONARDO *at some distance from him.*

Leonardo — How my heart beats! Whatever Albert may say, the unhappy bust can hardly give Eleanor any real pleasure. She will say it does, for the sake of not hurting my feelings, but my work does not satisfy me. Something is surely lacking! At first I deceived myself — but now I know it is but marble, a bit of marble, that resembles Eleanor, but is not Eleanor's own self. What a fool I have been! And how dull my chisel is! I am but a vain, ignorant fellow, after all! If there were time I would remove it. [*Perceives* ARNOLD.] Ah! still that evil shadow, determined to destroy all my illusions! He is probably thinking over his plan of campaign — preparing for the battle. What will his schemes be? He said he was counting on chance, on fate, or something of the sort. [*Pauses and approaches him apprehensively.*] Arnold?

Arnold — Ah, it is you again?

Leonardo — Why, why did you say you depended upon chance?

Arnold — Did I?

Leonardo — Yes.

Arnold — I do not know.

Leonardo [*aside, moving away from him*] — He is deceiving me, I know. There was some real reason for it. Ah! here is Eleanor!

Scene X.

At the rear are heard confused sounds of animated talking and laughter. Enter ELEANOR, TRINIDAD, PAULINA, CAMILLA, *and* ALBERT. ELEANOR *is a splendid vision of beauty, elegantly dressed; the other ladies, young, beautiful, and exquisite in their freshness, form a brilliant union of light, color, joy, and youthful beauty.*

Trinidad [*to* ALBERT] — But why will you not tell us what surprise you are preparing for us?

Paulina — Do not torment us so.

Camilla — Pray tell us, Albert!

Eleanor — No, no, do not tell us! If you do, there'll be no surprise left.

Leonardo — Eleanor!

Eleanor — Leonardo! [*They shake hands, and* LEONARDO *bows to the other ladies.*]

Camilla — But you have had a share in the surprise, Leonardo.

Eleanor — One has only to look in his face to see that he has!

Paulina — But do talk about it! Tell us something about it!

Albert — I cannot say a word. They have forbidden me!

Eleanor — And you, Leonardo?

Leonardo — I cannot!

Eleanor — How pale you are!

Paulina — And how excited!

Trinidad [*to* ARNOLD] — And are you in this surprise?

Arnold — No, madame. [*Rises, bows, and goes to rear of stage.*]

Trinidad — Look, Arnold is offended!

Eleanor [*to* LEONARDO] — Really, there is nothing the matter? You are not vexed?

Leonardo — I, vexed with you?

Eleanor — Come, let's have done with it. Where is this wonderful surprise?

Albert —

"She who loves me,
Let her follow me!"

[*Turns to right: all draw back, joking and laughing.*

Paulina [*laughing*] — Just listen to this piece of presumption! "She who loves" him, indeed!

Camilla — See, you are left alone! No one loves you!

Albert — Well, that *is* a surprise to me!

Eleanor — But where are you going to?

Albert — To your apartments, which Leonardo has taken by assault, treading Arnold under foot on his way to victory!

Eleanor — What does all this mean?

Albert — Inside there is the mystery, and the surprise, and the —

Leonardo — Silence!

Albert — And now:

"She who loves mystery
Has but to follow me."

Eleanor — So say we all of us! [*All together cry, "All of us, all of us."* ALBERT *enters the room and after him press eagerly* TRINIDAD, CAMILLA, *and* PAULINA. ELEANOR *is last, and*

stops as she sees LEONARDO *is not following her.*] And you, Leonardo? Aren't you coming?

Leonardo — I cannot!

Eleanor — But, it is your surprise!

Leonardo — Go in, Eleanor dear, you first of all.

Eleanor [*in doorway, about to enter*] — A mystery.

Leonardo — Oh! worthy of Paradise!

Eleanor — I will enter, then!

SCENE XI.

Leonardo [*listens at door*] — They must be looking at it now. I hear no sound. But what can this mean? Are they coming back already? [FABIAN *and* JACINTH *come from room.*] Ah! it is you.

Fabian — We retired in favor of the ladies.

Leonardo — And have they seen the bust yet?

Jacinth — As we came out they were just going in.

Fabian — It's a wonderful likeness, no doubt about it!

Jacinth — Somewhat idealized.

Fabian — In fact, it's a most beautiful work of art — a real masterpiece!

Jacinth [*shakes hands with* LEONARDO] — My best congratulations, Leonardo!

Fabian — And mine, too. [*Shakes hands.*] You have done works of greater boldness of execution, perhaps, but this has real merit — it is charming!

Leonardo — Nothing that I have done has cost me so much thought and hard work.

Jacinth — Do you feel sure the eyes are quite alike?

Leonardo [*somewhat alarmed*] — I don't know!

Fabian — I did not notice that, but I did think that perhaps a few more strokes of the chisel would improve the hair — give it more the feeling of life — of motion!

Leonardo — Possibly.

Fabian — In every way it is a most remarkable bust. I repeat my congratulations.

Jacinth — Your hand trembled a bit — do not deny it! It is nothing more than natural. In every way it is an exquisite work of art. We will go and tell them all in the reception-room. The doors must be opened in spite of Arnold!

Fabian — Until later then, Leonardo.

Jacinth [*aside to* FABIAN, *as they go out*] — Frankly, Fabian, what do you think of it?

Fabian [*aside to* JACINTH] — It's not bad, not at all bad. Still, it's not equal to some of his other work, not worthy of his reputation.

Jacinth — I believe myself that the bust and his reputation — are just about on a par!

SCENE XII.

Leonardo — They are not satisfied with it, and perhaps they are right about it. But if Eleanor is not pleased — Ah, here she comes! Now I shall know at last! Eleanor!

Eleanor — Leonardo! [*They greet each other as the actors may think best.* ELEANOR *is deeply moved.*] How beautiful it is!

Leonardo — Really? You think it is beautiful, then? You think it is a good likeness?

Eleanor — It is my very self! But as you see me, with the eyes of love, as you imagine me, Leonardo, the Eleanor of your innermost soul! Oh, how happy it makes me! How I love to think that you imagine I am as lovely as that, although I know I am not. No, no, I am not the one to undeceive you! [*Lovingly and with a bit of coquetry.*]

Leonardo — You would never succeed! That is the only thing in which you could possibly fail with me! Eleanor, you are beautiful, divine! — a thousand times more beautiful than this bit of marble wrought with these clumsy hands! Your eyes shine, and they say — oh, so many things! — but these are blind! When you smile with those dear lips of yours I feel as if heaven itself were caressing me; but the lips of the statue — when all is said and done, they are but marble. Your hair is so soft and so light! If I come near you, it stirs with my breath, while that I cut with the chisel was so stiff, so solid, so heavy! Forgive me, Eleanor, it was a profanation!

Eleanor [*gazes at him passionately*] — Oh, Leonardo! Do you really feel these lovely things you say?

Leonardo — You can doubt me?

Eleanor — I doubt you? Never! But I am only a poor weak woman, you know, dear, and I do so love to hear you say these sweet things! Your life is so much broader, living as you do for art, for fame, for immortality! While I — my one

art is to make you love me, my greatest glory is your love. I long for no other immortality than that which God may grant me at your side. [*Tenderly.*

Leonardo — But to me, too, all this fame and applause are as nothing! My only desire is for your love — and having your love I am happy, proud, immortal, here or under the earth or in heaven — wherever you may be, dear Eleanor!

Eleanor [*listens with joy*] — Whatever Arnold may say, it is very dear, this great love of ours.

Leonardo — And what does the fellow say?

Eleanor — Arnold? Oh, I don't know. He is very saintly, and says things that any saint might. You do not love him, but you will some day. You must listen to his advice, for it is always very wise and good.

Leonardo — Never! You should not heed what he advises: he will advise you not to love me!

Eleanor — That is true! [*Smiling mischievously.*] But never mind! The poor man is trying to make a saint of me, and what harm is there in that? I, a saint! No, I shall never be that; but the better I grow under Arnold's influence the more content my God will be with me — [*with look of dreamy mysticism*] and the greater happiness He will bestow upon me; and — as there is only one thing I really long for He will make you love me more and more. And He is all-powerful.

Leonardo — Eleanor, Arnold has great influence over you!

Eleanor [*almost whispering*] — You have greater!

Leonardo — He will devote himself to convincing you that I do not love you.

Eleanor — To be sure our saint is not very clever in that respect. In love affairs we do not need his advice!

Leonardo — He will try to prove to you that I love you only for your beauty!

Eleanor — Poor man! Yes, he has told me that. And perhaps I am not sure that you would love me just the same, even if I were downright ugly?

Leonardo — Look here, Eleanor, — it fills me with a great joy to feel that you are so fond of me, — and still, I fear that man! Do you know what they call him? "The man in black!"

Eleanor — What a child you are! I am perfectly easy about it in my own mind. And what could he do to harm us?

Leonardo — Nothing, while I am here — but —

Eleanor [*sadly*] — Are you going to leave me?

Leonardo — For a few days. You know I told you —

Eleanor — At last your father has summoned you?

Leonardo — Yes, dear. I did not dare tell you.

Eleanor — The days will be full of tears, but it is your duty to go.

Leonardo — You know why he wants me?

Eleanor [*filled with anguish*] — Yes, I know! It is to convince you that you ought to give me up!

Leonardo — But he will never succeed in convincing me. You feel sure of that, love?

Eleanor [*gazing at him with wide-opened eyes*] — Never, in any way?

Leonardo — Never! No human power can separate me from you, not even my father.

Eleanor — Do you swear it?

Leonardo — To him and to you!

Eleanor — This promise made, you must do the duty that lies before you — you must go when you are called.

Leonardo — To-night —

Eleanor [*embracing him*] — Oh, so suddenly! But never mind — go to-night, love!

Leonardo — Dear Eleanor —

Eleanor — I shall count the minutes with my tears, until you come back.

Leonardo — No, no, it will redden your dear eyelids.

[ARNOLD *appears in rear.*

Eleanor — And will you love them less when they are swollen and red?

Leonardo — Ah, cruel girl, how can you ask such a question? [*He sees* ARNOLD.] I see, it is only natural for you to say such things in this man's presence!

Eleanor — Do not let it vex you!

SCENE XIII.

ARNOLD *enters.*

Eleanor — Do come this way.

Arnold [*drawing near*] — At your service.

Eleanor — If you two really wish to do me a pleasure you will become good friends.

Arnold — I am no man's enemy.

Leonardo — And if I have enemies, it is not because I seek them!

Eleanor — Well then, I think if one of you has no enemies, and the other seeks none, we may all dwell in peace together.

Arnold — In peace, — and may God grant it in His great mercy.

Leonardo — With your permission, Eleanor, I will go and make my farewells to the ladies.

Eleanor — But before you go —

Leonardo — I will come back to say good-bye to you.

[*Bows to* ARNOLD, *and goes out at right.*

SCENE XIV.

Eleanor — I think Leonardo is quite justified in mistrusting you.

Arnold — How so?

Eleanor — Because you do not do him justice.

Arnold — I have already told you many times, and a moment ago I told Leonardo also, that for me life is a very serious matter, and I desire that it should be so for you too. For Leonardo life is merely a sort of comedy, in which he plays a rôle without responsibility. Deceiving even himself, he is constantly feigning emotions which he does not really feel.

Eleanor — I have such respect for you, and am so indebted to you, Arnold! You have been like a second father to me. Still, I cannot allow that in my presence you should offend the man who is so soon to become my master — who is so already, indeed. I love him, I respect him, I have faith in him, — and you will kindly refrain from talking about him to me. [*With energy.*]

Arnold — I did but answer your questions.

Eleanor — Pardon me, Arnold, but it pains me so that two persons who hold such high places in my heart should be so unjust to one another! That is, you are so unjust to him! He, poor fellow, never speaks except to defend himself.

Arnold [*with a certain violence and vexation in his manner*] — And you think he is in the right?

Eleanor — Yes, I always speak the truth.

Arnold — You really believe that he is in the right? Well, I will wait, hoping that the future will prove me to be so!

Eleanor — Again!

Arnold [*with bitter despair*] — To-day he is stronger than I! I will wait! [*Turns to rear.*

Eleanor [*follows him*] — You love me so much, and your affection exaggerates things! You would like my husband to be — who knows what? An angel, a saint, the highest perfection! But the world and men are not made that way! And think what concessions I make for your sake? Leonardo is very good, very noble, very generous, and I love him much better than if he were an angel, a saint, or one of those pieces of perfection of which you dream! There may be these ideal marriages of divine beings, in heaven perhaps! But on earth, they are like my marriage with Leonardo!

Arnold — How sad you make me! How your wings cling to the soil of this earth, Eleanor! You must not complain if, when you would fly upward, the clay clings to the feathers!

Eleanor — I shall not complain!

Arnold — Nor will you have a right to! You are no longer what you once were. When hours of bitterness come, ask not for God's justice. Ask for His mercy!

Eleanor — Have I done wrong, then?

Arnold — To avoid doing good is to do wrong.

Eleanor — Would you have me shut myself up in a convent? If I felt a vocation, it would be the right thing to do; but loving Leonardo as I do, it would be treason to him, cruelty to myself, and to God! — a falsehood!

Arnold — I have never demanded of you impossible perfections. I know you are good — but deplorably weak!

Eleanor [*meaningly*] — You would be glad perhaps if I were weaker!

Arnold — Eleanor!

Eleanor — You say what you think, and so will I. Would you rather have me play a part?

Arnold — No, no! Show me your heart, for I must learn to know it.

Eleanor — You know it well!

Arnold — No! until to-day I have never known it entirely.

[*Falls into chair by table, and hides his face in his hands.*

Eleanor — Come, Arnold, do not be angry, and do not let this sadden you. You should take into consideration that I have not your firmness. I will do all that you may require of me, aside from what concerns my love for Leonardo. And I

will try not to be selfish. You can always count upon me for help in your charities. Have I ever turned with disgust from aiding the poor, the sick, or those who suffer? Has fear ever frightened me away from danger of contagion? No; in those cases one should trust in God, and in Him I have put my faith! [*A pause.* ARNOLD *looks at her in thoughtful silence.*

Arnold [*in milder tone*] — Yes, Eleanor, you are right — I asked too much. After all, you are but a child, and I who am older and wiser should be more prudent. Rome was not built in one day, and the road to perfection is a long one. It cannot be helped! But have no fear. In the future I will say not a word to trouble you. Farewell, Eleanor! —

Eleanor [*humbly*] — I fear you are angry with me.

Arnold — No, I assure you.

Eleanor [*coaxingly*] — Then do not go!

Arnold — I must.

Eleanor [*holding him back*] — Oh, do stay!

Arnold — Really, I must go.

Eleanor — Why, where are you going?

Arnold [*smiling*] — Where? where? I, too, have my duties.

Eleanor — And you do not tell me what they are.

Arnold — Why should I not?

Eleanor — Well, tell me, then.

Arnold — You remember that sister of charity, Maria de los Dolores?

Eleanor — Yes, the one who took care of me with such devotion, three years ago, when I was at the point of death.

Arnold — The poor woman is very unhappy, and I am going to visit her.

Eleanor — Won't you wait a little, and when all the callers have gone we will go together.

Arnold — No, Eleanor, you cannot go.

Eleanor — Why, am I not worthy to go with you?

Arnold — No, not that, but because the poor sister's illness is something terrible — contagious. You cannot go. I could not take you there.

Eleanor — It would not be for the first time!

Arnold — No, but it would be cruel of me. You are so fond of life, and — your beauty! No, Eleanor, I could not consent.

Eleanor — If this is a punishment, it is a very cruel one!

Arnold — For Heaven's sake, Eleanor! Leonardo is coming. Silence!

Eleanor — But you will take me with you?
Arnold — No, I cannot. [*He stands apart from* ELEANOR.]

SCENE XV.

Enter LEONARDO.

Leonardo — Eleanor! [*In low tone.*] This man is still here! [*Goes up and takes her hand.*]
Eleanor — You are going then? [*In low tone.*] You are going, dear?
Leonardo — Yes, I must be off. [*In low tone.*] Yes, my love, my life!
Eleanor — So soon? [*In low tone.*] Must you go so soon, dear? [ARNOLD *watches them.*
Leonardo — I must. This very night I leave for Granada. [*In low tone.*] Heart of my heart!
Eleanor — But you will come back soon? [*In low tone.*] You will come back to me soon, love?
Leonardo — At once. [*In low tone.*] So quickly that I believe I will not go, after all!
Eleanor [*to* LEONARDO] — But you must, your father expects you.
Leonardo — And Arnold? —
Eleanor — Have no fear. He is convinced that we are right.

[*He turns away from* ELEANOR *to left. She follows him with her eyes.* ARNOLD *watches their farewell words, some said aloud in politely indifferent tones, and others in low whispers full of passion. The method of bringing out this contrast, their exchange of meaning glances, etc., is left to the discretion of the actors. At this moment all the others come in and surround* ELEANOR, *who hardly notices them, so absorbed is she in watching* LEONARDO. *The group forms a background full of splendor, light, youth, and beauty, in the center of which* ELEANOR *stands out clearly.*

Camilla — It is divine, I tell you! What beauty!
Paulina — A real miracle! It is Eleanor herself!
Trinidad — It is as fair as the fair original, Eleanor!
Arnold [*aside*] — Earthly beauty, that must some day turn to dust!

Eleanor — Farewell, Leonardo! [*She starts to go to him.*]
Leonardo — Good-bye, Eleanor! —

ACT II.

The stage-setting remains unchanged.

Scene I.

Present: Jacinth, Camilla, *a* Servant.

Jacinth — So the travelers have not arrived yet?
Servant — No, sir. And some ladies and two gentlemen have already been here to ask for them.
Jacinth — More ladies than gentlemen, eh?
Servant — Yes, sir.
Jacinth — Naturally! [*Laughing.*] Just what I told you, sister dear!
Camilla — They have probably gone to the station, brother dear. [*Meaningly.*] They are more impatient than we.
Jacinth [*to the* Servant] — Well, as they will be here soon, we will wait.
Servant — Yes, sir.
Jacinth — You heard what he said, — more ladies than gentlemen?
Camilla — But you'd better believe me, men are every bit as curious as women!
Jacinth — Not a bit of it! You have not left me a moment's peace all this morning, with your "Jacinth, how late it's getting! Jacinth, Eleanor must have arrived by this time! Oh, how I long to see her, Jacinth!" Oh, I know you all! I know you too, little sister mine!
Camilla — Why, this impatience to see poor Eleanor only shows one thing, — that we women are more feeling, more tender-hearted than you men. I am just wild to see her, to hug her and eat her up with kisses!
Jacinth [*ironically*] — Oh, this tenderness you women feel for each other would melt the heart out of a stone! Oh, mysterious depths of a woman's heart!
Camilla — What do you mean by all this?
Jacinth — That because Eleanor has been away for more than three months her girl friends are dying to welcome her back: nothing more than that! Why should I think other-

wise? But tell me this: if your dear little friend interests you so much as all that, why did you not go to see her, not even once, in the two long months her terrible illness lasted?

Camilla — How should I know? We sent every day to ask how she was getting on.

Jacinth — But you did not go yourself.

Camilla — I had no one to go with me.

Jacinth — No, that's not the real reason. Shall I tell you what it is?

Camilla — Say what you please.

Jacinth — Listen, and confess. Eleanor went with Arnold to see Maria de los Dolores.

Camilla — Yes, I know.

Jacinth — The unhappy woman was dying, and finally died of — smallpox — the most terrible malady of all, which puts an end to life, or to beauty, leaving its loathsome seal on its victim's face.

Camilla — Stop, stop, for mercy's sake! You make me shudder!

Jacinth — And Eleanor's soft, rosy skin was ruined by this terrible sign manual!

Camilla — Poor little thing!

Jacinth — And therefore you come with such eagerness, with such concern, with such love. [*He whispers.*]

Camilla — To see if she is fully restored.

Jacinth — And at the same time — for after all, life is prose — to see if she is greatly disfigured! [*Still in a low tone.*]

Camilla — For heaven's sake, be silent, you wretch!

Jacinth — Well, then I will, — as I have had my say!

Scene II.

Enter Paulina.

Paulina [*speaking to* Servant] — Very well, very well then, I will wait. Dear Camilla! [*Kisses her.*] Good day, Jacinth.

Camilla — I thought you would come.

Jacinth — And I too.

Paulina — I am so wild to see Eleanor, poor little dear! How she must have suffered! How many kisses I have for her! But — Camilla, do you think we can kiss her without danger?

Camilla — Why, yes.

Jacinth — It is four months now.

Paulina — The fact is, I am so afraid of it! You see, Camilla, if it were a question of charity, now —

Jacinth — In case of need you would risk your life, but not your pretty face!

Paulina — Come now, I am no hypocrite. I say just what I feel. The very thought of this malady fills me with horror and fright! Every one has but the face God has given him, and I should hate to have mine made hideous before my time.

Jacinth — Brava! This frankness is worth a good deal!

Paulina [*to* CAMILLA] — Don't you think so, too?

Camilla — I hate to think of such things!

Paulina [*very curious*] — And what news have you of Eleanor? How has it left her? Is she beautiful still?

Camilla — I do not know. No one has seen her. She has lived very quietly in Seville.

Paulina — But I am just dying to see how her face looks.

Jacinth — Paulina, you are a rare girl, and if at any time you break off with Paquito, just let me know, for I like you awfully for your goodness, your sweetness, and your frankness!

Paulina — Thank you, Jacinth! I do not know how to make believe!

Camilla — Has your mother come?

Paulina — She is not quite well, but it's nothing serious — her nerves again! I disposed of my teacher, and here I am, waiting for Eleanor to come. My dear, how dreadful it will be, if she has lost her beauty!

Camilla — Yes, it would be terrible!

Jacinth — A tragedy for her, and a comedy for the others!

Paulina — Not for all! For Leonardo it will be a tragedy!

Camilla — And where is Leonardo? Do you know?

Jacinth — Leonardo went to Granada, because his father summoned him. You know he is opposed to the marriage, and so he wrote for him to come. According to all accounts there were terrible scenes. The poor old man has a fiery temper, and Leonardo is his father's own son. So the result of all the trouble was that the good old gentleman had an attack of vertigo. Of course Leonardo could not leave him. It was during this time, while Eleanor was near dying, that Arnold took advantage of her weakness to cut the telegraph wires! He really put an end, or nearly so, to all communication! At last Leonardo learned through Albert that Eleanor is to come

to-day, and he will come to-day too. You may look forward to two moments full of emotion!

Camilla — That is, when Eleanor arrives.

Paulina — And again, when Leonardo comes, and then, when they meet! How exciting!

Scene III.

Trinidad *and* Fabian *enter at rear.*

Trinidad [*to* Servant] — You need not announce us.

Paulina — My dear!

Trinidad — Camilla! So you did not go to the station, after all? Good day, Jacinth! [*They shake hands.*

Camilla — No, dear, I thought I'd better wait for them here. [Fabian *greets the* Ladies.

Fabian — At your service, ladies! — good day, Jacinth.

Camilla [*to* Trinidad] — But you went down to the station?

Trinidad — Indeed I did. And there I met Fabian, who was so kind as to accompany me.

Fabian — Which was a great honor and most especial delight, believe me!

Camilla — So you saw Eleanor and Arnold arrive?

Trinidad — Yes, we saw them.

Paulina — But why are they not here? I do not understand this at all!

Camilla — Where are they, that they do not show themselves?

Jacinth — Don't keep us waiting like this. [*They all surround* Trinidad, *full of interest and curiosity, and she smiles with the air of one who knows all about it.*]

Trinidad — Patience, my children! Be very calm and very patient, and I will explain everything!

Paulina — Do pray begin, then! [*They draw closer.*

Trinidad — Well, my dears, you must know that our sweet Eleanor has looked death in the face! And that gives one ideas about duty, and the like, you understand? Religious feeling that has lain dormant comes to life again, and Eleanor, before coming home, has gone with Arnold to fulfill a sacred duty, paying a visit of thanks to her favorite Virgin, the Virgin of Sorrows.

Jacinth — At all events, they will be here soon now?

Trinidad — Directly.

Paulina [*curiously*] — Come, tell us —

Camilla — You saw her?

Trinidad — Did I not tell you so?

Paulina — And how is she?

Trinidad — Well rested, did you not think so, Fabian?

Fabian — Yes, quite recovered, and in good spirits.

Paulina — I don't mean that.

Trinidad — What do you mean, dear?

Paulina — We want to know how Eleanor's face looks. — Now I have said it!

Trinidad — Her face? She is pale, very pale.

Paulina — One may be pale and still very beautiful. How tantalizing you are! Tell us, is she still beautiful or not? Has her illness destroyed her beauty, or is she still the divine Eleanor we all know, whose marvelous bust is in her room here?

Trinidad — Alas, that I must tell you! Such a terrible sorrow! My dears, I wept like a Magdalen! And you will weep too when you see her!

Camilla — She is so changed, then?

Paulina — Poor dear, poor little Eleanor!

Fabian — Camilla, Paulina, you must realize this truth. Beauty is but skin deep, and there's an end to it all!

Paulina — On the contrary, Fabian, that is why it is so valued! Because it is so rare and frail, and so easily ruined!

Camilla [*eagerly*] — But tell us more, go on!

Trinidad — I have told you everything!

Jacinth — In a word, — a short, sad word and one that is very hard to believe, — our Eleanor is — homely!

Camilla — But tell us more in detail, my dear, not all in one word!

Paulina — Yes, is her color —?

Trinidad — That lovely cream and rose complexion is faded, and in its place an ashen gray —

Paulina — How horrible!

Camilla — And what more?

Paulina — That perfect profile?

Trinidad — That has gone too. Her profile is so sharp now, and her cheek-bones stand out! Oh, it is sad to see her.

Paulina — How distressing! To think of Eleanor thin and wretched!

Camilla — Gracious heavens! It is awful to think of!

Jacinth — Trinidad, you're positively funereal.

Paulina — And her eyes? Do her eyes shine as they used to?

Trinidad — No, they are faded, too. At times they glow with their old fire, and then they shine again, but that is even worse, for their light shows up all the ravages that the disease has made in that fair face. They are but fiery suns, shining on a desert of sand!

Jacinth — So poor Eleanor looks like an old woman, does she?

Trinidad — It is even worse than that! Old age keeps a certain beauty, whereas one can still see clearly that Eleanor is young.

Paulina — And — her hair? Has she lost her hair?

Trinidad — No, her hair is just as it always was, and that is painful, too, because the glorious setting makes such a contrast to the faded, lifeless face.

Paulina — And tell me, her figure —

Trinidad — It has lost its charming elegance, and is bowed down with her sufferings!

Jacinth — A complete wreck, then?

Fabian — Yes, complete, you may take my word for it. I did not recognize her when I saw her getting out of the train. Actually, I did not know her! I'm not a man to be easily affected by these things, but really I was very much moved! Very much moved!

Paulina — You felt like crying? Ah, the poor girl!

Fabian — Paulina!

Camilla — Silence, some one is coming! [*Goes to rear.*]

Trinidad — It must be she!

Jacinth — Is it Eleanor?

Fabian — No, it is Albert.

Paulina — How late it is!

Scene IV.

Albert *enters.*

Albert — He has not come yet. That's good, — a calm before the storm! Good day, ladies.

[*He shakes hands with them all.*

Paulina — Good day, Albert.

Albert — Fabian, Jacinth, some of you have been to the station. Did you see Eleanor?

Paulina — Yes, Trinidad saw her.

Jacinth — And Fabian.

Albert — And how is she?

Trinidad — She is quite recovered.

Albert — That's the main thing. And Arnold?

Paulina — Yes, to be sure! How is Arnold?

Trinidad — The same as ever!

Albert — Always the same black shadow!

Trinidad — Now I have told you all I know, — your turn next, Albert.

Albert — My turn?

Paulina — Of course, it's your turn to tell us the news. What else did we come for?

Albert — But what news are you after? — of what things or what persons?

Paulina — Why, of Leonardo, to be sure. Has he arrived yet? When is he coming here? and — [PAULINA *speaks always with levity; her manner is always somewhat frivolous, ingenuous, and sympathetic.*]

Albert — Well, to begin with, he has arrived.

[*They all surround* ALBERT, *full of curiosity.*

Paulina — Then he will be here by and by.

Albert — Yes, he will be here later on.

Paulina — But tell us more! Tell us everything you know about Leonardo, everything!

Jacinth — From the time when he learned that Eleanor was seriously ill.

Albert — When he heard of that he could not leave his father, who was dangerously weak. I wrote him as reassuringly as possible, and concealed the real nature of the disease, calling it a persistent fever, with typhoid symptoms — nothing dangerous. Finally I wrote him that Eleanor was getting better, and going to Seville or to the country, to complete her cure.

Paulina — I suppose Eleanor wrote him as often as she could?

Albert — I suppose so, yes, but I'm not sure of this. When I wrote him they were coming to-day he took the train, and an hour and a half ago I gave him a warm welcome at the station — a warm, hearty welcome, such as you will soon give our dear Eleanor here.

Paulina — But why is he not here?

Albert — He came here as soon as he arrived, not stopping even to refresh himself after the journey. But the servants told us Eleanor had not arrived; then we went to the station, where we learned they had come and gone away again! Then when we got back here, they told us Arnold had taken Eleanor to the church. Oh, how mad Leonardo was!

Fabian — Why so? There was no reason for it.

Albert — No reason, I grant you, but he was furiously angry for all that!

Fabian — I believe you!

Paulina — Of course he was impatient!

Albert — Then he wanted to go and look up Eleanor, but I knew the first time he met Arnold there was sure to be a row, and I would not let him.

Fabian — But why this feeling of antagonism towards so worthy a man?

Albert — Because I hold him responsible for Eleanor's illness.

Paulina — And you are right! — a thousand times right! It is malice aforethought to take such a beautiful girl to visit a smallpox patient!

Trinidad — No, no, dear. Nothing more than carelessness.

Albert — And Leonardo believes firmly that it was an infamous, horrible plot on Arnold's part: an attempted murder, nothing more nor less!

Fabian — Good heavens! The man is crazier than ever!

Paulina — Listen, is not that a carriage?

Camilla — Yes, it has stopped at this door.

[*Looks out on street.*

Jacinth — Yes, it is Eleanor herself! Now all hands ready to give her a warm welcome!

Paulina — At last we are going to hold her in our arms again!

Fabian — Now, do be careful! Not too much emotion!

Albert — You are quite right, Fabian. The poor girl must be quite weak still.

Scene V.

Eleanor *and* Arnold *enter.* Eleanor, *as* Trinidad *has described her, weak, pale, emaciated, her face showing traces of the smallpox, her beauty and gayety gone. In short, she*

shows a pitiful lack of beauty, but is in no wise a caricature. Dressed as a nun of the Carmelite order, or of that of our Lady of Sorrows, whichever is considered most artistic, she makes a striking figure, framed in the doorway.

Eleanor — At last! at last! At home once more! Heavenly Father, I thank thee! [*She stretches forth her arms, or expresses the deepest emotion in whatever way the actress may think best.*] Ah! you are all here! How good of you to come! [*She greets her friends, who all press around her.*]

Paulina [*embraces her*] — Dear, dear little Eleanor!

Camilla — My own sweet Eleanor!

[*Embraces her, vying with* PAULINA.

Trinidad — And where do I come in? Do I not count? Give me a kiss, too.

Eleanor — Oh, let me kiss you all! How good you are! How often I have thought of you! Oh, how I love you, love you! It seems like a dream, a resurrection! I could not believe — I thought I should never see you again!

[*She is deeply moved and weeps, while her friends all make much of her.*

Arnold — Come, Eleanor, you know all this emotion is bad for you. Allow me, ladies. — Now you must sit down quietly, and then to rest.

Trinidad — Arnold is quite right.

Paulina — Are you well, dear?

Eleanor — Yes, yes, but — yes, very strong. It is all over now. I am myself again. [*They make her sit down.*

Camilla — The same old Eleanor!

Eleanor — Now let me see you all! [*Looking at the men.*] My faithful friends! Fabian, Jacinth! [*They come up and shake hands with her.*] Albert? Yes, Albert, and no one else? [*Evidently looking for* LEONARDO.] I have spoken to you all? There is no one else? [*Sadly.*]

Fabian — You have greeted us all, Eleanor dear.

Eleanor — There is no one hidden?

[*She looks round in every direction.*

Jacinth — No one.

[*A pause.* ELEANOR *continues her search sadly and passively.*

Albert [*aside*] — Poor little girl! She is looking for Leonardo! [*They watch her curiously.*

Trinidad — Well, dear, you must be very tired. We all longed to welcome you, and now we ought to be going.

Eleanor — Not at all! Are you tired of me so soon! I cannot allow it. You must all of you stay to lunch with me.

Fabian — Oh, Eleanor!

Jacinth — Why, how could we, Eleanor!

Eleanor — No resistance, please! Be silent, and obey orders! I am so happy with you all! so strong, so full of courage! It seems as if everything else had been a bad dream! And my looks are improved, too, are they not?

Paulina — Yes, dear, your face is, — your face is all right, you know.

Trinidad — You are much better, oh, so much better!

Eleanor — Yes, I know, but let me look, let me look. [*Rises and goes toward mirror.*]

Paulina — Where are you going to?

Eleanor — To look at myself — to see for myself. I don't want you to deceive me. Ah! [*She steps back, and covers her face with her hands.*] No, no, I am not all right yet. I do not remember how I used to look, but I am not the old Eleanor!

Camilla — A little pale, perhaps, but that only makes you the more interesting.

Arnold — Come, this is worse than foolish!

Eleanor — Well, I will not talk any longer. Do go on laughing and jesting together as you always used to. You are staring at me so, as if you found something strange in me! Am I so changed? Do I shock you so? But it is so little! A trifle paler, a trifle thinner, a trifle weaker, and that's all. In a week I shall be myself again. Come, do not look at me so! You frighten me. Give me your arm, Albert, and take me for a little turn about the room. [*Through all this speech her manner is nervous and agitated. She takes* ALBERT'S *arm and walks about, while the others stand in groups and talk together, but without losing sight of her.*]

Albert — With pleasure, Eleanor.

Eleanor — And where is Leonardo?

Albert — He knows you have come.

Eleanor — And when is he coming, when? Tell me the truth now.

Albert — Presently.

Eleanor — Presently! — and what does that mean? Next month, next week, to-morrow, to-day? Do not torment me so!

Albert — But are you strong enough to bear a great joy?

Eleanor — Then he will come to-day?

Albert — But do not faint!

Eleanor — Please go on! [*She seizes his arm.*]

Albert — Ah, what strength! Well, then, he has come home, and will be here within ten minutes.

Eleanor — Merciful heavens! [*They all come to her side.*

Paulina — What is the matter?

Camilla — Are you ill?

Arnold — Eleanor!

Eleanor — Leave me! leave me, all of you. Why should I be ill? Let us go on, let us go on with our walk. [*She moves away from them energetically, half gay and half vexed, and clings to* ALBERT.] In ten minutes! But it is a shame to receive him in this costume! However, there is nothing to be done about it — it is a promise. Leonardo is sure to be shocked, thinking I am very ill. [*Smiling.*] And so I want to ask you, — tell me the truth, please, — how do I strike you? Will Leonardo be very much shocked when he sees me, do you think?

Albert — And do you suppose that Leonardo is going to mind about that sort of thing?

Eleanor [*thoughtfully*] — Leonardo is an artist. He loves beauty and hates what is ugly. He cannot help it!

Albert — But, Eleanor, I swear to you by all that is holy that Leonardo loves you with his whole soul.

Eleanor — Arnold says no, he does not. Albert [*in low voice*], I almost hate Arnold! It may be just one of my sick fancies, but I do not want to think of him! I will think of no one but Leonardo. How I long to see him! But now, I do not know why I am so afraid! Is it because you all of you stare at me so eagerly? Am I so very much changed, then? Please do not deceive me! As I see myself every day I cannot tell how much I have changed.

Albert — Why, Eleanor, what put such fancies into your head?

Eleanor [*looks at him sharply*] — Ah! you are not frank with me! But I shall find out yet. Come with me.

Albert [*laughing*] — Where are you going to take me?

Eleanor — To see my bust — the one that Leonardo made. It is in here, and I want to ask it what it thinks of me. It will not hide the truth! It is marble, and does not suffer! It is marble, and will not lie! It is marble, and will say to

me: "In me you behold your former self!" We will stand face to face, both of us reflected in the mirror, and then I can compare. Come, come quickly. [*Leads him off with her, and then suddenly changes her idea.*] No, stay here, and I will go alone — alone. I will stand face to face with the marble portrait, and then I shall learn what it can teach me. And then? — What more? — My face must brave its marble counterpart, and — when all is said and done, they are left to gaze on each other for all eternity! [*Enters room.*]

Scene VI.

All surround Albert.

Arnold — What is the matter with her?

Paulina — What was she saying?

Camilla — Is she ill?

Albert — I told her Leonardo might come at any moment, and then —

Arnold — And is he coming?

Albert — He is.

Arnold — Indeed!

Eleanor [*is heard from inner room*] — Oh! My God!

Paulina — A cry!

Camilla — It is Eleanor!

Trinidad — We will go and see what has happened.

Albert — Yes, do, for heaven's sake! [*Much alarmed.*] Do you know why she went? She wanted to look at the bust.

Jacinth — Good heavens!

Albert — Here she comes.

Scene VII.

Eleanor *enters sadly, convinced that she has lost all her beauty, a picture of utter dejection.*

Eleanor [*in a low tone to* Albert] — It has told me the truth! I know all now! [*She passes slowly by them and throws herself down on the sofa.*] Arnold, tell me, the soul may still preserve its beauty, though the face be ugly, may it not? Speak to me, tell me all these things that used to comfort me! Well, dear girls, I must just give up everything! No, no, not you — you are as lovely as ever! [*Caressing them and endeavoring to*

look happy.] Ah! I am surrounded by beauties! A choir of Angels! [ARNOLD *comes up too, and takes her hand.*

Fabian [*aside to* JACINTH] — It seems to me that she is anything but resigned!

Jacinth — And she will be still less so when she sees Leonardo, and — he sees her!

Trinidad — I think you really ought to rest now.

Eleanor — Yes, you are right. But I cannot bear to have you go! No, let us lunch together. But you may leave me alone for a half hour — that is quite enough. And now off with you, to the garden, to the conservatory, to my apartments, wherever you choose!

Paulina — We will do as you say.

Eleanor — And you, gentlemen, will bear the ladies company.

Fabian — With the greatest pleasure! You have but to say the word!

Albert — Poor dear! [*Exeunt in groups, leaving* ARNOLD.

SCENE VIII.

Eleanor [*seeing* ARNOLD] — You must go too.

Arnold — Are you annoyed? Are you angry with me?

Eleanor — I? Why so? On the contrary, I am deeply grateful to you. Who ever had a better nurse!

Arnold — Why should I go, then?

Eleanor — I must be alone. [*Harshly.*] Leonardo will be here soon, and I desire to be alone.

Arnold — So you still — ?

Eleanor — Always! —

Arnold — Until the moment of disenchantment comes!

Eleanor — What moment of disenchantment?

Arnold — What you foresee already!

Eleanor — If it comes, I will turn to you for help.

Arnold — Then — I shall expect you!

Eleanor — Yes, but now — [*Exit* ARNOLD *slowly.*

SCENE IX.

Eleanor — He will be here soon! How I have longed for this moment, and yet — how I dread it! He is so kind-hearted

that he is sure to hide his real feelings, but I shall guess them! This room is so full of light, and I am so afraid of light, now! I must make it a little darker. But within, I am unchanged — the same love, the same tenderness, the same heart! It is foolish to let these thoughts haunt me so, but what cowards we all are! Ah, some one is coming. It must be he. [*Pause: she rises and takes a few steps, then leans against the wall, a chair, the door, wherever seems best.*] Yes, it is he! [*Remains standing, shrinking timidly back into dark corner.*]

Leonardo — At last! They told me she was in this room, but I do not see any one. [*Looks round.*] Eleanor, my own Eleanor! I am really going to see her again, after all these months! Ah! [*He sees her.*] Excuse me, madame, but they told me I should find Eleanor here. [*Aside.*] Who can this be? If you will allow me — [*Goes toward* ELEANOR'S *room.*] [*Aside.*] How strange of this woman! She does not say a word! [*He is standing with his back toward her.*]

Eleanor [*her voice choked with tears*] — Leonardo!

Leonardo [*turns swiftly*] — Who calls me?

Eleanor — Leonardo! [*She bursts out crying and hides her face in her hands.*]

Leonardo [*going nearer to her*] — This voice! Who are you? Is it you, my love?

Eleanor — Oh, Leonardo! [*She opens her arms wide.*]

Leonardo — Eleanor! [*She falls weeping in his arms, and he presses her passionately to his heart.*] My love! My life!

Eleanor — At last, thank God, at last! It has all seemed a horrid dream!

Leonardo — At last, yes! After many days I hold you again close to my heart!

Eleanor — I thought I should never, never see you again!

Leonardo — And I have not seen you yet! [*Attempts to see her face, but she hides it against his breast.*]

Eleanor [*half laughing and half crying, fondly*] — No, no, do not look at me! You will think me so ugly you will not love me any more!

Leonardo — You, ugly! Ah, let me see! — I want to see you.

Eleanor — I have changed very much. I have grown so wretched looking! You will not know me. Really, you did not recognize me, you know.

Leonardo —But the room was almost dark! Now you will

see. Now [*he rushes to open the balcony shutters*] you will see if I know you!

Eleanor — Oh, don't do that! That is too much light!

Leonardo — For you, perhaps, but not for me. Let me have light, the full light of day! I have been blinded for too long. [*He takes her handkerchief away from her face and looks straight at her.*] Eleanor! Eleanor! [*He utters these two cries after having seen her, the first full of wild passion, the second of surprise and grief.*] My own dear little Eleanor, how you must have suffered! [*Embraces her again: she hides her face.*]

Eleanor — Yes, I have suffered terribly. I feared I should lose you! I have not recovered my strength yet.

Leonardo — Come, come with me, poor little dear, here close by my side, never to leave me again.

Eleanor — Never again? You really mean it?

Leonardo — Never, soul of my soul! [*From this point on he is very loving, but his words are mere repetitions of what she says, without spontaneity.*]

Eleanor — And you can love me just as you always have?

Leonardo — Even more, even more!

Eleanor — We must make up now for all we have had to suffer, by loving each other even better than before.

Leonardo — Yes, dearest, we must surely make up for lost time.

Eleanor — I wrote to you as often as I could, you know.

Leonardo — And what a comfort your first letter was to me! All of them were, of course, but especially the first. And I answered at once.

Eleanor — How kind, to be sure! Do you expect to be praised for answering my letters?

Leonardo [*carelessly*] — Still doubting my love! At least you've not changed in that respect.

Eleanor — Then I have changed in some way? Tell me how.

Leonardo — In no way! You are as good as ever, as loving as ever! An angel, Eleanor dear!

Eleanor — And nothing more? Kind, loving, angelic, and nothing more? [*Laughs bitterly.*] Not beautiful?

Leonardo — For me you are always divine! There are many kinds of beauty, of loveliness.

Eleanor — And what more? Go on!

Leonardo — And what if I do not know what to say, —

if I find no words, — my joy is so overwhelming! [*All this scene, as we have already said, is somewhat forced.* LEONARDO, *in spite of his efforts, cannot bring himself to speak freely.*]

Eleanor [*in low tone*] — In old times you always had dear things to say to me — but now, Leonardo, you do not love me any more — oh, I can tell! I feel you love me no longer! [*Almost in tears.*]

Leonardo — I! You can think that I love you less! [*More and more angry with himself.*] If I were capable of loving you less, I should despise myself, hate myself, loathe myself! So Arnold was right, then. To hold you in my arms, and not feel every fiber quiver with delight! If you believe I love you less, call Arnold, call him, and bid him turn me from your house! [*He is well-nigh desperate, feeling vaguely that his love has grown weaker, and indignant with himself: all this with the greatest sincerity.*]

Eleanor — Do you see? do you see? Now I am no longer afraid to look at you! Look at me now, — I am your own Eleanor. This heart that beats for you now is the same heart that has ever beat for you. The voice that tells you I love you is the voice that has told you so so many times. Does it not sound the same?

Leonardo — The very same! Your voice is unchanged!

Eleanor — And my heart! You would not forget my heart!

Leonardo — Your heart, too, is faithful.

Eleanor — And my eyes — no, my eyes no longer shine as they did once. And yet they see you still, unchanged. They cannot be very different, can they, if they see you just the same? [*Tenderly and lovingly.*]

Leonardo — Yes, you are still beautiful, still my own dear Eleanor. [*Speaks without conviction.*] And after all, what does beauty matter!

Eleanor — You used to consider it all-important.

Leonardo — There is a beauty that comes with suffering too. And you have suffered so much. But for heaven's sake, Eleanor, don't let's talk of this any longer, — it is belittling our great love. You are what you are, and as you are I love you. What does it matter if the outer form be fair or ugly? Within is the soul that I adore! Let your inner light shine, for that is what my soul worships.

Eleanor — If you really feel all that you say, I am a happy, happy woman! — even happier than before!

Leonardo — If I feel it? You doubt me again, and your doubt makes me despair! I do not wonder at it, though! It is all Arnold's work. I know him, I see what his plot is! Oh, the wretch!

Eleanor — What do you mean?

Leonardo — I mean that I see through his plot, his cunning scheme, and that I shall find a way of punishing him. [*He paces up and down, irate and threatening.*] As sure as there is a God in heaven, I will punish him!

Eleanor — What plot is this?

Leonardo — He took advantage of my absence!

Eleanor — How, and why?

Leonardo — How? By ruining your beauty. Why? Because he hates me — because he hated your beauty, and said to himself, "We will destroy it." The villain!

Eleanor [*dismayed*] — Destroy it! So it is quite, quite lost?

Leonardo — I mean — that is, he wanted to destroy it, but he could not succeed — of course he could not.

Eleanor — No, no, he did succeed! And I knew it, and now you know it too. It does not matter, for myself. I was neither beautiful nor vain. But I care on your account. You cherished an illusion, and — it is vanished!

Leonardo — Do not say such things, or you will drive me mad! Do not say that I have lost my cherished ideal, for you do not know what I am capable of doing. No, this man must not remain unpunished! You are mine, mine only, — and now I will look after Arnold. But you must rest now, a long, quiet rest. Soon we shall be united forever, but first I must settle matters with Arnold. You shall see, you shall see! [*Goes madly toward bell, and rings.*]

Eleanor — What are you going to do?

Leonardo — He shall come here. [*A* Servant *comes.*] Tell Mr. Arnold that he must come here at once — that your mistress desires to see him. [*Exit* Servant.

Eleanor — Dear Leonardo, do be calm! — for heaven's sake, be calm!

Leonardo — Impossible! Listen, I believe I shall feel again all the pleasure I took in seeing you, when I see this wretch again! He shall make up now for all that he has made you suffer!

Eleanor — But perhaps he did not bring about all my suffering. What if it were my fate?

Leonardo — Fate! What a notion! How innocent and unsuspicious you are! He knew what he was about.

Eleanor — No, no, Leonardo, he is incapable —

Leonardo — But some one is responsible for the evil that has fallen upon you. God alone knows who. But in my mind he, Arnold, is responsible. And I must — ah, he is coming.

Scene X.

Arnold *enters.*

Eleanor — Alas! alas! [*Throws herself on sofa.*]

Arnold — You sent for me, Eleanor?

Leonardo — No, it was I.

Arnold — They told me Eleanor.

Leonardo — I ordered them to say so, because I thought if you knew I wanted you — you would not come.

Arnold — Quite possible!

Leonardo — It is quite certain you would not have come — for fear!

Arnold — I, afraid of you? I think not!

Leonardo — Ah, you are not afraid of me? So much the better!

Arnold — 'Tis the truth.

Leonardo — And it should be true, too. You are still young, almost young, that is, — not an old man, by any means. And you are strong, — you should be no coward, — all of which I appreciate in you.

Arnold — Thanks for the good qualities you are pleased to discover in me!

Leonardo — And now for the bad ones!

Arnold — Oh, they are many!

Leonardo — Still, we can condense them into one word — you are a scoundrel!

Eleanor — Oh, Leonardo! For heaven's sake, —

Leonardo — Let me alone! You see he takes it quietly! You can say anything to him with impunity, — anything, anything!

Arnold — Certain persons may, yes!

Leonardo — Myself, for example?

Arnold — Yes, you.

Eleanor — Oh, Arnold, you too!

Leonardo — Do not interrupt him! Arnold, are you perfectly aware of what you have done?

Arnold — And what have I done, pray?

Leonardo — Eleanor was left in your care. You were like a father to her, responsible to God and responsible to me for this girl; — for though a woman, she was still a girl, who obeyed you like a timid child. You took possession of her, body and soul, — understand me clearly, of her body and of her soul! And now you have proved a traitor to your trust, — a villain and a coward in your treatment of her. For what have you made of her, of our Eleanor?

Arnold — I will tell you. Her soul is more pure than ever before, because suffering always purifies, and even more when in a holy cause; — her body — but for you who love her so, what does this earthly beauty matter? Her health is daily improving, and she will soon be strong again. I have saved her, and I bring her here to give her into your hands, into her husband's care. I do not oppose it! But why are you annoyed?

[LEONARDO *stands in silent dismay;* ELEANOR *goes up to him.*

Leonardo — He has the cunning of all malicious people, but there is an evil purpose lurking beneath it. My heart is loyal, and tells me so!

Arnold — Eleanor's heart will tell you the contrary!

Leonardo — Well, what is done, is done! Let us never speak of it again. But what of the intention — if Eleanor had died?

Arnold — But she did not. I took great care of her, and God could not abandon her.

Leonardo — A malicious traitor, of most refined cunning, sly and fallacious in your arguments, you still have the better of me, and I acknowledge it. I confess you say things that I cannot answer: you hold me as in a vice, and yet, in spite of all, though I may be a fool, and a pitiable sort of fellow, — still I am a man of honor, and you — you are not! This I consider to be proved beyond dispute, that you are at heart a villain! In short, sir, as you have failed to inspire me with confidence in your honesty of purpose, I do not wish you to remain a day longer, no, not an hour, in Eleanor's presence!

Arnold — You would turn me out of the house?

Leonardo — Precisely!

Eleanor — Oh, Leonardo, how can you! How can you wish to send him from the house?

Arnold — When you are her husband you will have this right, but not now. Until then I cannot comply with your wishes.

Eleanor — Leonardo, Arnold, would you kill me with grief?

Leonardo — No, my love, no; — but this man must leave you!

Eleanor — Leonardo!

Leonardo — You do not dare, and yet you really think as I do. Tell him to go! Have no fear of him!

Arnold — Afraid? And why should she be? She is mistress of herself and of her own house.

Eleanor — Oh, Arnold!

Arnold — My child, do not grieve over this. I can love you and pardon you. Speak out your whole thought with perfect freedom, — you will neither offend me nor annoy me.

Leonardo — Eleanor! You can hesitate between him and me?

Eleanor — No, Leonardo, you first of all! [*She embraces him.*]

Leonardo — This time I have won!

Arnold — You have won, and it is only natural. I will leave this house at once, but openly and proudly, as is my right. [*He rings.*]

Eleanor — What would you do?

Leonardo — What does it matter to you?

Arnold [*to* Servant] — Ask the ladies and gentlemen here to kindly step this way. [*Exit* Servant.

Eleanor — For heaven's sake, Arnold, pray think — consider —

Arnold — Have no fear.

Leonardo — Do not be afraid, dear.

Arnold — You cannot remain alone here until the marriage takes place. I will suggest to one of the gentlemen here, Fabian, perhaps, that he should come here with his wife, or that you should go to them. I have summoned them to arrange this and to say good-bye to them all, nothing more.

Eleanor — You are treating me cruelly, both of you, cruelly!

Arnold — I, Eleanor!

Leonardo — I am treating you cruelly, Eleanor, and you say this on his account? Ah, Eleanor, this is not love! —

Eleanor — You were never angry with me before.

Leonardo — I am mad! Pardon me! It is because of him, and he is smiling at it! My God, give me calm!

Scene XI.

Paulina, Camilla, Trinidad, Fabian, Jacinth, Albert, *all enter by twos and threes.*

Arnold — You will pray excuse me for having interrupted you in this way, but I find I must leave this house forever, and I do not wish to slip away like a thief in the night! Besides, I must talk over something of great importance with Fabian, and would beg him to go with me to my rooms.

Paulina [*to* Camilla] — What's this he's saying?

Trinidad [*to* Albert] — What is it all about?

[*They speak in low murmurs together, showing great surprise.*

Fabian — I am at your service.

Arnold — Good-bye, Eleanor!

Eleanor — Arnold, it is impossible! [*She rushes to his arms, unable to restrain herself.*] I owe you too much for us to part in this way! [*Weeping.*]

Leonardo — No, no! All of you will understand how things are, and you will guess that Eleanor's excessive generosity will not allow her to say what you all of you know.

Arnold — I accuse her of no sort of ingratitude.

Leonardo [*to* Arnold] — How dare you talk of accusing, and of accusing her? I will try to restrain myself, but my patience has its limits! [*Turns to them all.*] This man is to leave this house, not because of Eleanor, who is still capable of a friendly feeling toward him, but because I have demanded that he should. I cannot allow in her presence a man who is capable of sacrificing her, as he has lately done, in so pitiful a manner! In short, I would have you all know that I turn him out of this house! And if this is an insult, Arnold, if this is an affront, know that I hold my person ready to answer for my words!

Eleanor [*goes to him, and endeavors to restrain him*] — Silence, Leonardo, for God's sake, silence!

Arnold — I could hold you in no way responsible for your precipitate words! Good-bye, Eleanor. You will call upon me when you are in need, and God grant that it may not be soon! [*Exeunt* Arnold *and* Fabian.

Eleanor — Oh, Leonardo, how grieved I am!

Leonardo — For whom? For him or for me?

Eleanor — For both, and alas! for myself as well.

Leonardo — Ah, this fellow leaves the house, but his evil spirit still haunts her mind! Away, away! O evil spirit of the "man in black." [*Waves his hands in frantic passes over* ELEANOR'S *brow; all surround her, striving to console her.*]

ACT III.

The stage-setting remains unchanged.

SCENE I.

Albert — So Miss Paulina and Miss Camilla are here?

Maid — Yes, sir, they are with Mrs. Fabian and Miss Eleanor.

Albert — And no one else?

Maid — No, sir, no one else.

Albert — Then do me this favor. I know you are very discreet —

Maid — Oh, Mr. Albert!

Albert — Well, of course you are! Then make some excuse for going in, and in a low voice you must beg Miss Paulina and Miss Camilla to come into this room, because I have to consult them for a moment about something very important.

Maid — With pleasure, sir. [*About to go.*]

Albert — But listen — no one but the two young ladies are to know about this. You understand?

Maid — Yes, sir, and perhaps the young ladies have gone into the conservatory — they wanted to get some flowers.

Albert — So much the better! Well, you will go at once.

Maid — Yes, sir, at your service, sir. [*Exit at right.*]

SCENE II.

Albert — Paulina and Camilla are very kind and frank, and will tell me all I would like to know. They are very sympathetic and devoted to Eleanor, and deeply interested in Leonardo, too. Here they are, now! How promptly they answer their summons! [*They enter very hastily.*

Paulina — Well, Albert.

Camilla — Good day, Albert.

Paulina — The maid told us with a great show of mystery that you wanted to speak to us, and in the most strict privacy!

Albert — Quite right, and to both of you!

Paulina — You see, dear, he is joking!

Camilla — Yes, it is all some joke of his.

Albert — On the contrary, it is something very serious — of the greatest importance.

Camilla — Yes? —

Paulina — Tell us, do!

Albert — Come over here, then, with me. [*Leads them to sofa, and sits down between them.*] A most private conference! Just we three in the secret!

Paulina — Oh, do begin!

Albert — You two are here almost all day long, and know about everything that goes on, — you understand, — everything!

Paulina — I think so. I think so! Since Arnold went from here — that is, since they drove him away — a month, now, isn't it? —

Camilla — A little more.

Albert — Go on, I understand.

Paulina — Well, since then both of us have been here pretty much all the time — we lunch with Eleanor, and dine with her and Leonardo. In fact, we just about live here with her!

Camilla — What else could we do, Albert? We must keep the poor girl company. She is so sad, the dear thing!

Paulina — And how could she be anything else? Her constant companion is Fabian's wife, Gertrude, and you know! —

Albert — Yes, I know, — she came to stay until the day of the marriage.

Paulina — Yes, the poor lady! She means well, and we have the greatest regard for her, — but, my dear, she is harder to get along with than Fabian himself; you may imagine how poor Eleanor feels!

Camilla — Leonardo comes every morning and every evening, but of course he can't be here all the time. And as Gertrude never leaves Eleanor for a moment, poor Leonardo is naturally bored to death! And Eleanor, poor soul, grows sadder every day.

Paulina — If it weren't for us, they would die! These unhappy lovers would die! They really would. But look

here! you called us in to tell us something, and instead of that we seem to be telling you all we know!

Albert — I can't get a word in, just because you are telling it all!

Paulina — Well, not another word from us!

Camilla — Not one, sir!

Albert — My dear friends, now let us begin at the very beginning. First, when is the wedding to be? What have you heard about it? What can you tell me?

Paulina — Why, surely you, who are Leonardo's best friend, ought to know more about it than we.

Albert — That's just it! Leonardo does not know himself, and that's the greatest pity of all. Between us, in perfect confidence you understand, Leonardo is going mad. You do not know how desperate he is! I am really afraid of his reason.

Paulina — So he does not know when he is to be married?

Camilla — And has he asked you to ask us?

Albert — No, I came on my own account, without saying a word to Leonardo, to make out what the trouble is here — for there is something wrong, and seriously so. They are conspiring against Leonardo and against Eleanor, in order to separate them. There is no doubt possible — they are trying to separate them! It is infamous, and I'm not joking about this, you know.

Paulina — You are quite right, there is something wrong. There is a plot, an outrageous one, and we are on your side!

Camilla — Paulina and I have said so time and time again. They are placing some difficulty in the way of the wedding.

Albert — We shall see! Give us your proofs!

Camilla — Well, in the first place you must know that Fabian, Gertrude, and Arnold are all one! They are just hand and glove!

Paulina — They've stepped in between Leonardo and Eleanor with some evil design, and are deliberately trying to separate them!

Camilla — And then another thing is — they've made it impossible for Eleanor to fix the date of her own wedding day!

Albert — Yes, I know. When Leonardo asks her she avoids answering his question.

Paulina — And again, I have often found her crying, in her room.

Camilla — But what I am going to tell you next is even more important. One evening when Leonardo was going away, after talking some time with Eleanor, I followed him quietly because he was so pale I was afraid he might do himself some harm. Well, when he came in here he just pressed his head between his clenched fists, and I am certain he was sobbing to himself! I did feel so sorry for the poor fellow!

Paulina — But what I am going to tell you now is even worse, and [*to* CAMILLA] I have not even told you yet. [*They draw nearer in their desire to hear.*] Arnold and Eleanor write to each other! And Fabian arranges about it, and perhaps even encourages this mysterious correspondence! I know it for a fact!

Albert — I was afraid of this, and so was Leonardo. If Leonardo should meet him! — but God grant they may not meet.

Paulina — Silence, here comes Eleanor!

Albert — We will have our talk out later on.

SCENE III.

ELEANOR *enters.*

Eleanor [*comes in as if lost in thought, her head sunk on her breast; she walks mechanically and is talking to herself*] — Yes, this very day we must decide! Why prolong the agony? What must be, must be! Neither he nor I can hold out against them any longer! [*Sees the others.*] Ah, you are here? Good day, Albert.

Albert — And very much at your service, Eleanor!

Eleanor — Yes, I know. You're a true, good friend.

Albert — You seem pensive, and full of care!

Eleanor — I, pensive? Oh, no, just as usual.

Paulina [*slyly*] — I know what she is thinking of!

Camilla — And I, too! Who will guess?

Eleanor — You dear girls are always talking nonsense!

Paulina — May I tell? You will not be angry? It is not too indiscreet?

Albert — Do let us know!

Paulina — She was thinking of fixing her wedding-day; now, weren't you?

Camilla — That was it, but she need not confess.

Albert — How happy Leonardo will be, if it is only true!

Eleanor — Do you think it would make him so very happy?

Albert — What a question! And how it would pain him to think you could ask it.

Eleanor — Why so?

Albert — Because — because if you do not make up your mind to appoint the solemn day the poor fellow is — well, you know how he feels.

Eleanor — He is very sad? Yes, he must be, I am sure.

Paulina — Now, Eleanor, you must listen to us! We are both of us very angry with you, and Albert, too! — all three of us!

Eleanor — Angry, with me? Why are you?

Paulina — You can be very mad with me if you want to, and call me imprudent, indiscreet, prying, and whatever else you like — but we are angry because you are so ungrateful and cruel — so very cruel!

Eleanor — I, cruel!

Paulina — Now don't make believe you do not understand, and in addition to everything else play the hypocrite! Yes, a thousand times yes, you are ungrateful and cruel to poor unhappy Leonardo.

Camilla — And I say the same, too!

Albert — And I refrain from repeating it solely out of respect for you!

Paulina — You do not love him as he loves you!

Eleanor — You say I do not love Leonardo!

Camilla — No, you do not. Paulina is right.

Albert — And he does not deserve your coldness, on my word of honor.

Paulina — And we think so, too!

Eleanor [*looks at them fixedly with ill-concealed pain; at length she begins to answer them, her emotion growing deeper and deeper as she continues*] — You say I do not love him? — that he loves me better than I do him? I ought not to make this confession, and yet, why should I not, as you are all like sisters to me, and Albert my dearest friend! And sometimes I feel the need of hearing my own thoughts spoken aloud! This talking to myself, day and night, is getting to be an intolerable torture. I must tell you now that you are wrong! I love him, and I love him now more than ever, as faithfully as ever mortal loved. I do not know — angels may love more deeply, but

of womankind, women who have human hearts, not one loves as I do!

Paulina — Ah, what would Leonardo give to hear you!

Camilla — It would drive him wild with joy!

Paulina — You can tell him, word for word! You have only to learn your lesson perfectly.

Albert — I?

Eleanor — No, no, I forbid you — I entreat you! Now I can never be frank with you again.

Albert — Eleanor, of course I will obey you. [*Sadly.*] Evidently you have some reason for not wishing him to know it, but I cannot guess why.

Eleanor — Because — Well, I have my reasons. I want Leonardo to live calmly, peacefully, without remorse.

Paulina — What curious ideas you are bringing to light! Remorse, because one is greatly loved! It is the first case on record!

Camilla — And you really love him more than ever?

Eleanor — Oh, much more! Before I loved him calmly, and now — I love him to distraction!

Paulina — Another riddle?

Eleanor — No, it is no riddle, as you call it, but the natural result of circumstances. Formerly, as every one told me I was pretty, — Leonardo oftener than any one else, — and as my luxurious surroundings helped the illusion, — my mirror flattered me, and I was little more than a child, I believed it. So I was torn between love for Leonardo and a certain selfish and vain love of my own person. But now — now my vanity, my beauty — if it ever existed — all, all have vanished, and Leonardo stands alone, without a rival in my love. At present, in the whole wide world, there is for me no love, no dream of happiness, no thought, beyond Leonardo. And if he alone is left to me, what can I do but cling firmly to my one hope? For him is left my pain-racked body, my pale, thin face, all these ruins of a woman's beauty, — but the soul is untouched, entire! there is no pallor, no stain! not even that fell disease had power to rack the soul!

Paulina — Oh, you are grand!

Camilla — This is true love!

Albert — If only Leonardo could hear you say this!

Eleanor — It would torture him, perhaps. But he must never hear it, never! Let me look. [*Goes to left, pulls aside drapery, and looks into room.*]

Camilla — What are you doing? What are you looking for? [*She lets curtain fall.*

Eleanor — I thought he might have come, but there is no one there. [*Smiles sadly.*] He spends hour after hour in that room. He has placed my bust there, my birthday gift, and has improvised a sort of workshop — a studio. The poor fellow persists in thinking the bust must resemble me, that with two or three strokes of the chisel we shall turn out alike, and yet he dares not touch it. I find him almost constantly here, gazing and gazing at the marble, his eyes filled with tears. [*Showing great excitement again.*] No, no, there is no use in trying to deny it. The blow has struck me hard, but for Leonardo and his love it has been — fatal! Courage is of no further avail! I must put an end to it all.

Albert — Eleanor, I beg of you —

Paulina — Hush, I think I hear Fabian coming!

Camilla — Fabian always comes opportunely!

Albert — Yes, he never fails to!

Scene IV.

Fabian *enters.*

Fabian — Paulina, Camilla, we have met before to-day.

Paulina — Yes.

Fabian — But not my good friend Albert.

[*They shake hands.*

Albert — No.

Fabian [*goes to* Eleanor *and speaks in low tone, with great mystery*] — Arnold is here. As you sent for him to come —

Eleanor — Certainly. You need make no mystery of so simple a matter. I was told that Arnold was waiting to see me, and I asked him to come.

Albert — Eleanor, I regret it, on Leonardo's account.

Paulina — After what has happened — if Leonardo should meet him —

Eleanor — What difference does it make? He must learn it this very day, — I must tell him, and so I must see him. Fabian, if you will be so kind as to call him.

Fabian — Certainly, he is waiting in this room. [*Exit in search of* Arnold.]

Albert — I do not know just how to express it, but I foresee —

Eleanor — Something very sad? — and I too!

Albert — Well, good-bye, dear Eleanor.

Eleanor — Good-bye, Albert, you will always be my friend.

Albert — Always! [*Goes to rear.*]

Paulina — Then we will leave you with Arnold. Fabian bores us to death, but Arnold frightens us to death!

Eleanor — Poor man!

[PAULINA *and* CAMILLA *join* ALBERT.

Paulina [*to* ALBERT] — Are you going to tell Leonardo everything?

Albert — I don't quite know yet. I am going to wait for him — to detain him if he comes.

[*Exeunt* ALBERT, PAULINA, CAMILLA. *They pass* ARNOLD *at door, and all bow.*]

SCENE V.

Arnold — You sent for me, and here I am.

Eleanor — Thank you, you are always so good to me.

Arnold — I do my best to be.

Eleanor — I shall trouble you to-day for the last time.

Arnold — How so, the last time?

Eleanor — Because I must put an end to the whole situation, and I will do so to-day. This torture cannot continue.

Arnold — You suffer greatly, then?

Eleanor — Yes, greatly. But my suffering is of little importance. I wish to prevent all further unhappiness in Leonardo's life.

Arnold — You are still thinking of him?

Eleanor — Yes, always. He is always my first thought.

Arnold — Then why am I here?

Eleanor — Possibly to bring about what you desire most, — that my marriage with Leonardo should be definitely given up, — that I should leave this house with you, and hide myself in the shadow and the silence of the cloister.

Arnold — And the great peace —

Eleanor — No, not for me! For me there is nothing left now but everlasting despair!

Arnold — Then you stay here?

Eleanor — No, now that I have thought it all over, it cannot be. Leonardo loves all that is noble, all that is pure, all that is beautiful — for beauty is but a form of what is good —

only mean, low minds hate what is beautiful. Leonardo is fond of me, but how can he love me now! When I look in the glass I feel no love, not even sympathy for myself — nothing but hatred! And why demand the impossible of Leonardo?

Arnold — This is vanity, Eleanor, vanity and vexation of spirit! You will perfect the greatest of all sacrifices, but not in purity of spirit, not without dragging it through the mire of human nothingness! But tell me just what you have decided upon.

Eleanor — Leonardo is struggling desperately!

Arnold — Yes, I know. He feels this wild desire to flee from you, sees that it would be a base action, and so refrains — from pity!

Eleanor — No, not that either. If you use the expression "from pity" in order to wound my pride, you make a mistake. I neither feel the blow, nor does it leave a wound. Leonardo does not hesitate, nor has he hesitated. If I say "to-morrow is our wedding-day," to-morrow it will be. He is in despair because he hopes for that first fresh love, and cannot find it. We love the pure snow, the fresh rose, the fair light of day, but who could cherish a heap of gray ashes, or love them — or kiss them? It is the will of God; — as God willed, so He made us, and one can hardly expect of Leonardo that he should improve on God's own work!

Arnold — But even now your desire is not quite clear to me?

Eleanor — I desire Leonardo's happiness, nothing more than that. And our Heavenly Father is witness that I speak the truth.

Arnold — His happiness — ! Yes! There is no word in the human language that is not a lie! Do you know what you will finally do? I will tell you. You will struggle, knowing that you are not to conquer. You will luxuriate deliciously in your sacrifice, knowing all the while that you are not going to sacrifice yourself. And at the end you will go to the altar with Leonardo, you will become his wife. And as he does not really love you, he will be the victim of your cruel sport! Then the day will come when you receive your punishment — the day when his beauty-loving eyes shall light upon a fairer woman! Then, as you have said God has ordained that we should love snow and roses and all that is bright and lovely, and that tears alone are shed on the pale ashes of our fires, on

that day you will be an object of pity to Leonardo, if not a troublesome burden, an odious obstacle!

Eleanor — No, no, not that! How well you know the sore spot in my heart! Another woman? Never! May I never live to see that day! No, I would sooner die than incur his contempt, his hatred.

Arnold — Do not speak of dying. While there are still duties to fulfill we have not the right to die. While there exists selfishness which should be punished, the chastisement should not be withheld. So long as there is a sacrifice to be made, we must not flinch.

Eleanor — Yes, you are in the right. It is strange that when you wring my soul the hardest, then you are most surely in the right. I must not hesitate, I will decide at once.

Arnold — Yes, but when?

Eleanor — Now, at once!

Arnold — Have you the courage? I very much doubt it.

Eleanor — I shall find it.

Scene VI.

Enter Paulina *and* Camilla. *They come in hastily, talking together. Then* Paulina *goes to* Arnold, *as if to divert his attention, while* Camilla *and* Eleanor *talk in low tones.*

Paulina [*to* Arnold] — Are we interrupting you? Do we disturb you?

Arnold — Not in the least.

Paulina — Leonardo is coming with Albert. I warn you so you may not meet each other. It seemed to me —

Eleanor — You are right. Arnold, come this way, please. I have something more to say to you.

Arnold — Just as you say. [*They all turn to right; as* Arnold *allows the ladies to pass first,* Leonardo *enters and recognizes him. He starts forward, but* Albert *holds him back; exit* Arnold.]

Scene VII.

Leonardo — It is he! I am sure of it! I feel it in my heart!

Albert — Whom do you mean?

Leonardo — That man! His influence makes itself felt directly. Why is he such a coward, or why is he so cold? It is useless to provoke him, useless to insult him. Ah, if he were only willing, how quickly we might end this affair!

Albert — I believe you exaggerate. Your tragic genius constantly lures you on to imagine some great catastrophe!

Leonardo — I feel it is coming! It is very near now — very near — perhaps this very day.

Albert — But why are you possessed with this idea?

Leonardo — Why? Why are things as they are? Simply because they are so! And it is all one to me now. I wish to put an end to it, come what may! Perhaps Arnold is here for that purpose. I would like him to remain with Eleanor, that he may poison her soul, and then I too, with them — and at last, the final struggle.

Albert — But I see in this no catastrophe, no final struggle, nothing of the sort. It is quite natural he should call on Eleanor. Then to-morrow the wedding-day will be fixed upon, and you marry Eleanor, and that is the only tragic dénouement possible to your comedy!

Leonardo — Eleanor does not yield — she doubts me, and shuns me. She no longer loves me — perhaps even despises me.

Albert — She loves you better than her own soul, and does not attempt to conceal it. She said so, not long ago, on this very spot, and with words that rang with passion and with truth. If you could only have heard her!

Leonardo — She is so good that she will not deny me her love, but at heart she despises me, — and she is quite right to.

Albert — You are unreasonable, Leonardo. Why should she despise you?

Leonardo — Because I deserve it, and because I despise myself — because I hate myself! For whom do you imagine I hate worst in this world? Arnold? Not at all, but my own self. Arnold may be a low-minded fellow and a hypocrite — I believe he is — still he is a man of penetration and talent and knows me well — better than I know myself, perhaps.

Albert — Do not say that sort of thing!

Leonardo — I am a wretch, a vulgar, heartless being. My affections are false, my enthusiasm but a will-o'-the-wisp, my tenderness a mere mask, which I wear for my own benefit! — and so foolish am I that I can always deceive myself at will!

How sad you are, I say to myself, and then I weep! How happy you are! — and I laugh! I am but a ridiculous puppet, and my feelings pull the strings. My whole being is governed by the external, the superficial, the coloring of things. The worthless tinsel of nature fascinates me, my mind is filled with tinkling nonsense, in my hands art is but a child's rattle!

Albert — Stop, stop, Leonardo. I will not listen to another word!

Leonardo — And what do I care if you do not listen, if I must keep on repeating it, day and night, above all, at night! As a mother puts her baby to sleep with a drowsy sing-song, so I, after long sleepless hours, can only make sleep come by repeating aloud: I despise myself, I despise myself, I despise myself — and so, by dint of despising myself, I fall asleep!

Albert — It's certainly enough to drive you crazy. And do explain the whole case to me, for I have never understood —

Leonardo — But nothing can be simpler. Did I not love our Eleanor with a love which I believed to be deep, true, — endless? Then Arnold foresaw — it was an illusion, nothing but an illusion! For listen, when Eleanor ran the cruel risk of losing her beauty, and I, when I saw her, was so dismayed, so sad! — I can never tell you how sad! — at that instant I felt that I despised myself to such a degree that I would gladly have fled from myself, flinging to the winds heart, brains, feelings, taking with me the one thing I recognized to be mine, — black nothingness — for I am naught!

Albert — But, Leonardo, then you do not love Eleanor?

Leonardo — That is the point — and that is the one thing that has kept me alive. When I think that I shall lose her, the agony is terrible, my despair grows blacker, and 'way down in the depths, in the very depths of my being, an unexpected tenderness is springing into life!

Albert — Then you love her!

Leonardo — But do I not tell you I have lost all confidence in myself? How can I know —

Albert — These are the vagaries of an artistic temperament.

Leonardo — I cannot tell. But listen. I will not give her up, and I am ready to sacrifice my life, if necessary. To be sure, it's no great thing —

Albert — You do yourself an injustice, Leonardo. You're a good-hearted fellow.

Leonardo — No, I am not modest. I have a firm will, firm

and invincible, and for this reason I shall fulfill my duty. I shall punish myself for this when the time comes for punishment, and for this I will fight until I conquer. Eleanor shall be mine, because she loves me and her happiness depends upon it. Whether I am happy or not is of little consequence. I will make believe!

Albert — So that —

Leonardo — So that to-day everything shall be decided. I have no fear concerning myself. My will only counts in that I make it obey me. Eleanor shall be happy.

Albert — She herself said a short time ago, "Leonardo first of all!" She sacrifices herself for you, thinking you do not love her. You have doubts about your love for her, but she has none! She knows she worships you!

Leonardo — So much the better! This puts new life in me!

Albert — And now for the struggle. I think she is coming.

Leonardo — Alone?

Albert — Yes, alone. I will leave you together.

[*Exit at left.*

Scene VIII.

Eleanor *enters.*

Eleanor — Leonardo!

Leonardo — Eleanor! [*Goes to meet her.*]

Eleanor — We are alone? [*She looks around in every direction.*] I do not see clearly, as it is growing late — as it begins to grow dark in here. [*Her voice trembles.*]

Leonardo — And as your eyes are full of tears!

Eleanor — I will not try to deceive you. It is true, I have been crying and — I am crying still!

Leonardo — Did Arnold make you cry?

Eleanor — Ah, you knew that he was here?

Leonardo — I knew it. Look, what a proof of my confidence in you! I let him poison your soul against me, and said no word!

Eleanor — No, he was only giving me advice.

Leonardo — Oh, you go to another man when you need advice? Do you love me less then — or perhaps not at all?

Eleanor [*passionately*] — You can ask me that? Listen! I have loved you, always, but now I love you more than ever

before. I shall die, still loving you! With my last sigh I shall strive to breathe your name — "Leonardo," and if I cannot finish it, and if God lets me enter His heavenly kingdom, — in heaven, before our Heavenly Father, I will at last utter the whole dear name, "Leonardo!"

Leonardo — Oh, Eleanor!

Eleanor [*aside*] — How selfish I have been! If I tell him this, he will sacrifice himself to me. My love is very great — not passionate, as it used to be, but it is deeper.

Leonardo — I cannot bear to have you feign a feeling — either exaggerating your love or making me believe that you love me less.

Eleanor — But indeed, I tell you the truth. Our love has changed its nature, but how can we seek to remedy that? — I live as by a miracle, without strength, nor beauty, nor youth — my love was like a flaming fire, that blazed for a brief moment — now the heat has gone, and only the light remains. Suppose our marriage had taken place before this misfortune, for we cannot deny that it is a great misfortune — and suppose that years and years had passed, that I had grown old — then you could not love me as you once did, nor could I love you with the old warmth. [*This with resigned sadness and then continuing with passion.*] And yet, I should love you warmly; I desire no other good, wish for no other happiness than to think of you always, to be with you always in dreams, — to die with all the tortures of the Inferno if I doubt your love!

Leonardo — You really loved me before, Eleanor, — your love has not changed?

Eleanor — No, no; in spite of myself I say these things that I ought not to say. You see — they are so fresh in my memory — those happy days! [*Aside.*] My God, give me courage!

Leonardo — Eleanor, we must decide now, instantly. You are suffering greatly, and I feel it will drive me mad! Really, at times I feel my mind is failing!

Eleanor — Yes, we must come to a decision. For this I came to you here, and for this — I am weeping!

Leonardo — Oh, Eleanor, because of what you are going to say to me?

Eleanor — Yes.

Leonardo — Were they tears of joy or tears of grief?

Eleanor — Of grief — of great grief. Still, we must go

through with it, for your sake and for mine — for your future, which I hope will be full of happiness and fame, — and for my calm, which is all that is left to me now!

Leonardo — I do not understand you.

Eleanor — Leonardo! you must know —

Leonardo — Yes, I understand! Yes, you are planning to flee from me — this man is taking you from me! And do you think I can tamely resign myself to that? Eleanor, would you be happy at my side? Then we will both be happy. If you die of grief, then I will die with you. Were you no longer a fair woman, dear, but a lifeless form of clay, it were all one to me. Dead, I would lift you from your shroud, hold you in my arms, and then — let God do with us as He will.

Eleanor — No, Leonardo, do not say this, for my strength begins to fail me. It may not be! It may not be!

Leonardo — Let this man come, and let me stand out against you both! Arnold! Arnold!

Eleanor — Yes, let him come! Alas, I can hold out no longer.

Leonardo — Arnold! Arnold! — at last!

Scene IX.

Arnold *enters.*

Arnold — You called me?

Eleanor — Yes, because I am at the end of my strength! [*She throws herself in his arms.* Leonardo *remains at a distance.*]

Leonardo — Yes, I leave her in your arms for the moment — what can it matter? But I swear that I shall win her from them, that she shall be mine forever!

Arnold [*to* Eleanor] — Have you made up your mind to follow my advice?

Eleanor — Yes.

Leonardo — You see, I make no objections, — I wait passively. Go on! go on!

Arnold — You will come with me to the place where all earthly griefs are forgotten?

Eleanor [*lifting her head and looking at him*] — No, I shall never forget them!

Leonardo [*laughs harshly*] — She does not forget them!

Arnold — But without forgetting them, since that is impossible, you give them up?

Eleanor — Yes.

Arnold [*to* LEONARDO] — You hear?

Leonardo — I hear. If I were not so sure of conquering could I listen so calmly? Would I not rather have torn out your heart! —

Arnold — This is no calm! It is the excitement of fever!

Leonardo — You are right! I feel that every nerve quivers, striving to force me to attack you. "Down with the man in black," I hear them whisper in my heart, but my will is stronger, and I say: "No, no, this is not the right way; it leads to nothing, — silence, silence!" I feel a wave of hot blood rush to my brain, and there it throbs and throbs, but I bid it be still. It almost blinds me, but still I see clearly enough to know where Eleanor is, and that contents me. I am at peace within, — and so, go on, go on!

Arnold — My dear Eleanor, we must end this for your sake and for his.

Eleanor — Yes, we must — for his sake — anything for his sake.

Arnold — Then go, say good-bye to every one, and come back here, where you will find me waiting for you. Then we will leave this house.

Eleanor — Yes, we will leave this house!

Arnold [*vexed*] — You say yes, but you still linger.

Eleanor — I am going! Yet a little more, and — courage!

Leonardo — Obey! I say nothing! He is waiting, and I am waiting! Have no fear!

Eleanor — Well, then, if it must be — [*Exit slowly.*]

SCENE X.

Arnold — It is for your own good, Leonardo. Make up your mind to it.

Leonardo — To what?

Arnold — To lose her.

Leonardo [*aside*] — And what if I do not lose her?

Arnold — Her memory is still left you.

Leonardo [*aside*] — And she herself!

Arnold — I pity you so, and would not grieve you further — you still have a future, and fame!

Leonardo — Fame? No, not that, but Eleanor, — yes!

Arnold — You are raving!

Leonardo — Possibly. My words may rave, but my will is calm. I see nothing and understand nothing! Everything seems to whirl before my eyes, yet my will stands as firm as the earth's axis. You would have me yield? You believe you may conquer? This is really your thought? What an illusion! In this supreme struggle I shall come out victor — I, Leonardo!

Arnold — Poor fellow!

Leonardo — No, you are the one to be pitied, for you are going away in the pride of conquest. As Satan fell from heaven, so you will fall!

Arnold — This poor fellow has really lost his mind!

Leonardo — You are afraid! Confess it!

Arnold — But what do you intend doing? Are you going to use force?

Leonardo — I do not know — force? — no, that is a poor way!

Arnold — What then?

Leonardo — I know that Eleanor is mine, that she must be, — that my duty exacts it, that my will demands it. But how? I know not! [*Paces back and forth wildly.*] Let her come! Let her but try to leave me, and we shall see. By what means? All means are good — even to tearing out my heart — or yours!

Arnold — But there she is!

Leonardo — And here am I!

Scene XI.

Eleanor *enters in street dress.*

Eleanor [*to* Arnold] — Give me your arm — I cannot —

Arnold — Courage, my dear.

Eleanor — Farewell, Leonardo!

Leonardo — Eleanor, you are going to leave me?

Eleanor — I do it for your sake — I swear it!

Leonardo — And you will go from this house with this man, and I shall never see you again?

Eleanor — Nor shall I see you!

Leonardo — You will be sorry for it.

Arnold — Do not listen to him. These are idle threats.

Leonardo — I repeat, you will be sorry for this!

Arnold — He is trying to intimidate you! Come!

[*They take a few steps toward door.*

Leonardo — I tell you for the last time, — you will live to repent it. [ELEANOR *and* ARNOLD *are already at the door.*

Eleanor — Farewell, forever!

Leonardo [*in a tragic voice that thrills one with horror*] — If you take another step I shall never see you again! — ah, mad girl, you would not have me see you? Then I never shall again! Wait, I tell you, wait! [*He rushes madly to his studio at left.*]

SCENE XII.

Eleanor — What can he mean? — I shall repent — but why?

Arnold — Come, child, come. [*He tries to lead her away.*]

Eleanor — No, I could not leave him in this way — I could not! Do you not see I could not?

Arnold — We must. If we do not go now we never shall!

Eleanor — He said I should regret it. He has some attempt in his mind — some design — do you not fear something?

Arnold — Yes, I fear you will regret your sacrifice! [*Tries to lead her to door.*]

Eleanor — But I will not go without seeing him — for the last time! [*She resists his efforts.*] I tell you it is for the last time!

Arnold [*he continues the struggle*] — No!

Eleanor — This is obstinacy on your part!

Arnold — Yes, of your passion!

Eleanor — Of your own!

Leonardo [*a terrible cry of pain is heard from the studio*] — Eleanor! —

Eleanor — He is calling me! Do you not hear that horrible cry?

Leonardo [*from studio*] — Eleanor!

Eleanor — What desperate cries of pain! They freeze my blood!

Arnold — You must not go!

Eleanor — Yes, he is calling to me!

Arnold [*with expression of despair*] — Eleanor, I call upon you, too.

Eleanor — But he is first, first above all! [*She tears herself away and rushes to room at left.*]

Leonardo [*he appears at the door, vacillating, stumbling, and leaning on door-frame: his hair is in wild disorder, his dress also. His eyes and cheeks are covered with blood: he comes forward blindly, his hands stretched forward as if seeking some support.*] — Eleanor, Eleanor, where are you?

Eleanor — Here, Leonardo! [*Rushes to his arms.*]

Arnold [*retires to rear of stage, filled with horror*] — Heavens, what have you done? What have you done?

Leonardo — I have punished my wicked eyes! I am blind! blind!

Eleanor — I see nothing but blood!

Leonardo — And I, nothing, not even blood! My chisel has made its last stroke — in human flesh!

Eleanor — My soul! My love! Oh, Leonardo!

Leonardo — And would you leave me now?

Eleanor — Never, dear, never! [*She clings to him.*] I am yours forever, to all eternity!

Leonardo — To all eternity! She has said it — I have won the battle! And the "man in black" is defeated! And now, may he fall far, may he destroy himself, may he lose all that is worth the having in this life, the "man in black"!

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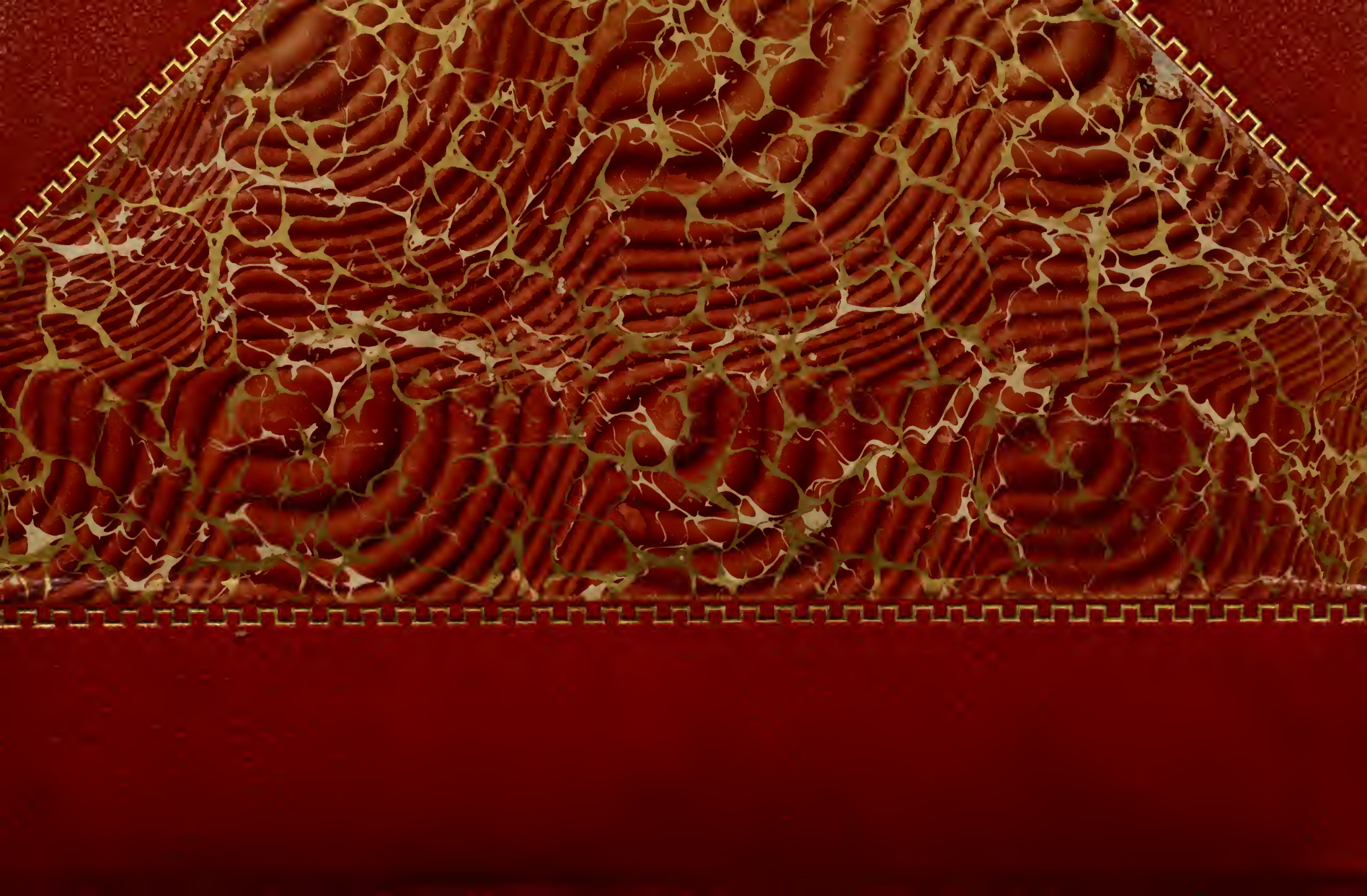
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